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GRUMBLEBY HALL

OR WHOSE BOY?

**MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.**

GRUMBLEBY HALL

OR WHOSE BOY?

BY

E. LLOYD.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

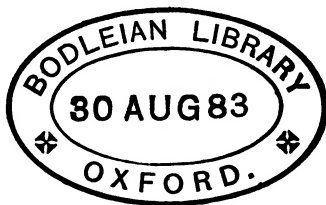
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TO

SUCH OF THE OLD GRUMBLEBIES AS MAY YET REMAIN

(AND THEY MUST BE FEW)

THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED, BY ONE WHO STILL RETAINS

PHOTOGRAPHED ON HIS MEMORY,

A VIVID IMPRESSION OF THEIR MORE GENEROUS

AS WELL AS HARSHER TRAITS.

P R E F A C E.



WHILST wading through the following pages, it may add somewhat to the reader's interest to know that the work is not one of mere fiction, but that almost every incident is identified with the personal experience of the author, and that, although written in novel style, extravagant as some of the scenes may appear, the story in the main is a relation of facts.

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GRUMBLEBY HALL;

OR, WHOSE BOY.



CHAPTER I

THREE PRIME FACTORS INTRODUCED, OF WHOM MORE
HEREAFTER.

ONE morning in the summer of 1825, the clock of St. Clement's Danes in the Strand, London, dolefully jerked out the notes of the old psalm tune it had been clanging forth, for the edification of the dwellers in the streets, lanes, and inns around, every morning, noon, and night, time out of mind.

In days of yore it had chimed to better purpose; for then the sonorous sounds, as they vibrated from the old belfry, had aided the devotional spirit of the faithful few who dwelt in the surrounding sparsely-inhabited fields and lanes, or along the river bank, and who, as the dying tones caught their distant ear, reverently raised their hearts to Heaven in solemn worship.

Often, as the villagers, or youths and maidens from the city, congregated at the church door on summer Sabbaths, some ancient dame would tell how, long centuries ago, before any religious edifice was erected there, Alfred, the great Saxon king, had permitted a remnant of conquered Danes to live and die on that spot (whence the latter portion of the church's designation), and how those bells seemed, even then, distant as was the date, to toll a requiem for their pagan souls; and as the eager listeners still lingered round the oral book, she would tell how, in later days, before Harry the Bluff destroyed its prestige, the place had become renowned far and near for its 'fair fountain,' dedicated to St. Clement, whose martyrdom was commemorated

by an anchor, that, with a remnant of godly awe, she pointed out as still existing; though wherefore that symbol the aged chronicler could not explain, unless on the hypothesis that, whilst drinking at the healing fount, the patient was significantly pointed to the water of life, of which 'whosoever drinks shall never thirst again;' and in the assured hope thereof, which hope the anchor symbolized, quaffed the water of the venerated well, even though it did not formerly, as then, repose under the shade of the sacred edifice.

But time wore away, as did the bibulous devotees, and gave place to a more irreverent age; and as field after field disappeared, and the place became thickly populated, there arose a generation too heretical and too sceptical of saintly drinks, to care to refresh their souls at the sacred fount, or even to quench their thirst thereat, at least with the same purport as did their pious forefathers; and who, from entertaining doubts of its sanctity, soon became equally dubious of the healing properties of the spring itself. And thus, proceeding from bad to worse, a still more degenerate race succeeded, whose ungodly preference for waters of a more *spiritual* potency was, of course, a very natural result of so wanton an abandonment by their predecessors of the purer waters of the holy well. So the once sacred fount, gradually shorn of its attractions, descended into meaner use, supplying the neighbourhood for purposes in which its virtues were much more apparent, until it eventually fell into discredit and neglect, and finally disappeared,—as some say, built over by the Old Dog tavern, or, as affirmed by others, its site marked by the pump removed a few years since, bequeathing only its name, *in memoriam*, to the adjoining lane, thence called Holy-well Street.

But though the bells appeared to have lost their ancient vocation, the pious old clock seemed to have interposed, and taken to itself the special duty of presenting, by proxy, the daily praises of the motley surroundings, as well as affording the same benefit to the full tide of humanity ebbing and flowing below, thereby relieving both of any presumed necessity for celestial contemplation; and thus leaving them free to meditate on schemes of greed and gain, or in the undisturbed pursuit of pleasure, ambition, or crime, according to their several bent; and who, if thoughts any higher ever occurred to them, were, with rare exceptions, content to leave the expression thereof to the old clock tower.

Just as the first note of the aforesaid psalm tune had struck, a country-looking personage was essaying to cross the top of Essex Street. He was habited in a large, loose, blue tailed coat, with brass buttons and velvet collar; a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat rested on the back of his head, and a stout pair of yellow-topped boots reached within an inch of a pair of drab corduroy breeches, the interval exhibiting ribbed grey worsted stockings. Although only of medium height, he was in other respects of rather massive proportions, being about the complement of two ordinary men rolled into one. His effort at crossing the street had not been a complete success, as he narrowly escaped being knocked down by a cab, that at the same instant was turning into it from the Strand, the driver whereof only pulled up long enough to relieve himself of an oath, and, with raised whip in a threatening attitude, to demand 'if he knew where he was driving to,' but, without awaiting a reply, drove on towards the hackney coach office at the foot of the street, probably called there to answer some inquiries relative to his own defective knowledge and conduct.

'Drat the fellow!' said the country-looking person, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his fright, by no means diminished by half-a-dozen shouts to 'look out' when the danger was past, and which had brought him back to the side-walk. 'Drat the fellow! what's he mean?' saying which he stood and looked very defiantly after the receding cab, a proceeding that appeared to somewhat relieve him, and during which his nerves became further composed by the soothing chimes issuing from the aforesaid church tower, the last notes of which were falling on his ear, when, suddenly recalled to a recollection of the business on which he was engaged, he exclaimed, 'Bless me, it can't be that late;' and then, half doubtful that it could be, he turned his face mechanically upwards in the direction of the tower, without, however, attaining a sufficient altitude to observe the dial of the clock, and, tugging at a thick steel chain, at the end of which were suspended two heavy seals and a key, he drew from his fob, as the repository for watches was then called, an article that in these days would have served for a small-sized kitchen clock, and, having applied it to his ear to make sure it had not stopped, sprang open the case, and, after a cursory glance, returned it to the depths whence it had been drawn, not without some little exertion, the voluminous drab-coloured waist-coat requiring to be pulled up at least a foot before the capacious

opening of its depository could be reached, quite forgetful, however, in his disturbed state of mind, that he had not regulated the clock by his own timepiece.

As he resumed his progress, which this little disputation had retarded, he exclaimed, half audibly and in a positive tone, '*It can't* be so late;' thereby evincing that the additional testimony of his own watch had failed to carry conviction,—not an unusual occurrence when one begins to have misgivings that it *is* possible we may be behind time, and are keeping somebody waiting. Shuffling along, he endeavoured to quicken his pace, but it had no other result than to cause an increased oscillation, and a corresponding increase of puffing and blowing.

This double portion of humanity, that had thus so dogmatically disputed the hour with good St. Clement's, it may be further stated, was somewhat advanced in years. In earlier days it is possible he was a more active man, but if so, this quality must have long ceased, for, as has been intimated, his organism was now on so extensive a scale, that the odds against him were too great to start on a race with Time, carrying the weight he did, even minus the watch, and yet it was a feat that the old gentleman had been persistently attempting for the last fifty odd years, and he had had a hard time of it, the old mower always keeping ahead, and, though hauling him along the whole distance, only succeeding in bringing him in last of all the course. In fact, he was always *behind* time, his own disclaimer to the contrary notwithstanding.

Without waiting to accompany the tardy old gentleman, as he jogged on through the crowd, momentarily augmenting as the morning advanced, we will step on at a brisker pace, and, passing St. Mary's on the right, the first of the fifty churches erected in the reign of good Queen Anne, occupying the site of the famous Maypole, and leaving Somerset House on the left, cross the road nearly opposite the latter, and proceed a few doors up Catherine Street on the right hand, until we enter a druggist's shop,—well, it was not a druggist's either, although the red glare and the blue glare that fell on the pavement at night, when the light flickered behind the big-bellied, long-necked bottles, seemed to indicate it had some relation thereto; but a brass plate on the door read thus: 'Dr. Scarr, Surgeon.'

Behind the counter stood a middle-sized, lean, large-boned, strong-built man, about twenty-five or twenty-six years old, of dark complexion, and on whose countenance rested a sombre,

repelling shade, heightened by premature lines, indicative of care or hardship, and that might be looked for in one double his years. He was just then attired in a white, or what had been that colour, apron and sleeves, intended to preserve a very faded and stained black suit from further defilement, whilst engaged in pounding in a mortar some delectable compound of a streaky white and black, which, having been duly battered and smeared around the inside of the vessel, re-collected with the spatula, and again battered and besmeared, was finally gathered together, and taken out and rolled on a board, affording evidence of its previous use by the adhering residuum, but the amalgamation whereof with the present ingredients would at least increase its quantitative, if not add to its qualitative, properties. Having undergone this manipulation, the board was turned over, and the brown-looking substance elongated into the breadth of said board; placed thereon, a nervous rush over its ribbed surface, under pressure of a wooden instrument held in both hands, metamorphosed the whole into a number of small symmetrical pills, which, being dusted with a white substance, were presently deposited in various-sized boxes, and labelled with divers directions as to mode and time of taking, and other particulars, illustrative of their marvellous therapeutic qualities, and applicability to complaints of a very distinct and diverse nature,—particularly those coming under a class to which the opposing term ‘anti’ was prefixed, such as anti-scorbutic, anti-dyspeptic, and other cognates, and more especially still the anti-pathetical, this latter probably the condition in which their virtues were most apparent, judging by the effect on its subjects, who thenceforth entertained a strong antipathy to pellets of that or any other class.

Having completed this task, and deposited the boxes in a drawer ready for use, except a couple required for that number of patients, he wiped his hands with his apron, and, untying the same, drew off the sleeves, and threw the whole into a corner, and then flapped his hands on each side his breast, very similar to the proceeding of a male fowl who feels himself suddenly called on to crow over some performance that it occurs to him is worth crowing over; having executed which, he—not the fowl—immediately relapsed into his ordinary scowl. His sallow face was indented by sundry little cavities, much after the pattern engraved on a petrified stone of a shower that fell ages ago; a large, thick pair of black bushy eyebrows overhung his lustrous

eyes, which, added to a slight turn in his nose, and a sinister curl on his coarse lips, with a flat forehead, gave a forbidding cast to his features; his head and whiskers were of the same colour as his brows, the bristly hair of the former persisting in growing with the ends pointing upward; his short neck was encircled by a broad sarsenet cravat, with a stiffener inside that exhibited itself through portions of the former, worn through by friction with the greasy collar of his coat; a stiffly-starched shirt collar projected so high, that, as his head turned from side to side, it operated upon the under part of his ears, necessitating the frequent use of his fingers to force it down.

At the further end of the shop was an arched doorway, opposite to which, a dark passage intervening, was a door, the upper portion whereof was glazed and curtained on the inside half-way up. This door opened into what was termed the 'surgery,' in which the Esculapius to whom the establishment belonged *saw* his patients, though the general impression on the first entry of such patients was, that it must require keener vision than usually possessed by ordinary mortals to accomplish this feat, the small modicum of rays of light that contrived to struggle their way into the room having first to expend a great portion of their illuminating power in lighting up the gloomy shop across which they passed, then over the passage, whence they were faintly refracted through the aforesaid curtained door into the small apartment, rendering the darkness *quite* visible. There was a window at the opposite side of the room, but as this looked out on a questionable neighbourhood, it was always kept closed by a shutter, thereby effectually excluding all light, save that at one period of the day a feeble ray would occasionally glint through a hole cut in the shape of a heart near the top, and fall diagonally into a corner of the room, exhibiting in its trail a luminous path, along which floated myriads of molecules, capering and dancing with a sort of mad exhilaration at the short prospect of such fantastic enjoyment, and which, closely related to a room full of the same atoms, that took their rise from the mouldering carpet on the floor, were undeniable testimonies to the adaptiveness of the place to the diseased patients, whose cases were there submitted to the investigation and treatment of the skilled practitioner whose aid they sought.

Pacing up and down this room, evidently in no amiable mood, was a slight-built man of small stature, and about sixty years of age. A large powdered wig reposed on his very small head,

much too small for the wig, and which would therefore have set rather uncomfortably, but that it overlapped two ears that projected at about an angle of forty-five, and thereby materially aided in retaining the said wig in a permanent position, at the same time causing a sensibly enlarged appearance to the otherwise very compressed head, strangely in contrast with the diminutive facial outline. His low, wrinkled forehead was fringed with thin grey brows, that protruded over a pair of small watery eyes, appearing smaller than they were by the habit of keeping them half closed,—it might be the result of long occupancy of the dark room, which he seemed to prefer when at home to brighter rooms above the shop, where he resided; his pointed sharp nose was unusually close to his puckered labials, and as closely uniting with the latter was a sharp small chin; his thin grey whiskers terminated almost where they commenced. A thickly-folded white neckcloth took charge of his small throat, whilst his short person was encased in a black tailed coat, buttoned tight, and black pants also fitting very tightly, the lower portion at the calves disappearing in a pair of patent leather Hessian boots, always exhibiting a high state of polish, that might have provoked the envy of Warren & Co., or the jealousy of Day & Martin.

‘What keeps that man so long?’ said Dr. Scarr, the person above described, as he pulled out his watch for the twentieth time during the last ten minutes, and halted at the door to take another look over the curtain into the shop, in the vain hope that the cause of his detention might have entered since his last turn across the room.

Now it unfortunately happened that at that moment the gentleman behind the counter, who went by the professional designation of the assistant, having completed the manufacture of the little catholicons, for want of further employment in that direction, had commenced his morning’s survey of the shelves, and, after replenishing such of the glass-stoppered bottles as required it with the mysterious liquids that the well-worn, abbreviated labels indicated them to contain, he had passed on to the conserves and unctions contained in the jars and gallipots, until he was brought to a stand by one requiring a more thorough examination than could be accomplished by raising the cover and replacing it; whereupon he took down the honey jar, and placed it on the counter for a closer inspection; but as no satisfactory conclusion as to the quality of its contents could be come to without subjecting it to a further test, he was in the act of

supplementing his inspection by the required analysis at the very moment when the surgeon was making the above reconnaissance, and whose eyes, just then more than half open, failing to meet the object of their search, fell upon the assistant. Nearly wound up to the highest pitch of impatience, he threw open the door with a bang, and in another instant confronted the astonished deputy, who, with a good-sized piece of honeycomb between his fingers, his face on a plane with the ceiling, was in the act of dropping the luscious bit into his watering mouth.

'Is it nice, Mr. Grumphy? Is it nice, sir? Is it nice? I say,' screeched the irate surgeon, bringing his fist down on the counter with a thud that started a phial bottle thereon into a movement that terminated its further usefulness, by falling to the floor and breaking into a thousand little crystals, ready to operate upon the feet of the first barefooted boy from the neighbouring court, in a much more speedy mode than the contents of the phial would probably have done on its intended recipient.

Mr. Grumphy was by no means a nervous man, nor easily excited, but it will be no disparagement to that gentleman to say that the sudden apparition of the surgeon at so awkward a moment did rather unsettle Mr. Grumphy, and, as a consequence, he let go his hold of the morsel, which instantly fell into the lowest depths of his capacious mouth, and before he could recover it, or swallow, or resort to any speedy way of ridding himself thereof, such a fit of coughing ensued, that in another moment, comb, honey, etc., were coursing down the visage of the surgeon, filling his eyes, matting his brows and whiskers, and dropping on to his dry lips, upon which nothing so sweet had fallen for many a day, and thereby affording him an opportunity of judging for himself whether 'it was nice.' Back rushed the half-smothered man to the surgery, spitting and spluttering, and uttering language not to be recorded. Groping his way to the washstand in one corner, after a prolonged ablution he contrived to remove the viscous unction, and reappeared at the arched doorway, his eyes unusually dilated with passion, and vainly endeavoured to give utterance to his wrath, whilst he went through sundry pantomimic gestures, at times shaking the towel and at others his fist at the mute assistant, who appeared completely dumbfounded.

Happily for both, at this moment the outside door, or rather the half thereof, the other half being kept permanently fastened, was thrown wide open, whereupon the surgeon retreated into his

sanctuary. After one or two abortive attempts to force an entrance, and which was only finally accomplished by sidling in, in waddled the portly gentleman whose soliloquy at St. Clement's has been noted. Overcome by his effort at an unusual speed, his face bore testimony to the effect: a copious perspiration was rolling down his glowing cheeks, and, with an audible and quick respiration, he threw himself into a chair, his head falling back, and only able to utter a few audible grunts.

'Hallo!' exclaimed the assistant, drawing a long breath of relief at the timely diversion, and impressed with the idea of an incipient apoplexy, 'what's the matter, sir?' and he leaped over the counter, and grasped the white neckcloth of the plethoric old gentleman, and commenced a violent tugging thereat in order to loosen it, but which, for every purpose of respiration or ventilation, was quite loose enough. But as the presumed apoplectic resisted, and stretched out his heavy arm to prevent him carrying out his intention, the assistant hesitated as to the next step.

Still holding out his arm to keep the assistant at bay, he took off his hat with the other hand, and drew out a large red cotton handkerchief, and commenced vigorously wiping the perspiration from his face, neck, and head; having done which, he made several attempts to clear his throat, and eventually succeeded in giving the perplexed assistant to understand that he wished to see Dr. Scarr; whereat that gentleman, who had been contemplating the scene from the open door of his room, advanced, and, in as bland a manner as his recently ruffled temper would permit, introduced himself as the person asked for.

The surgeon concluded, from the state of his visitor, that Mr. Grumphy had rightly divined his presumed patient's condition, and thereupon took him by the arm and conducted him into the surgery, directing the assistant to follow with a broom and a basin. Whilst the old gentleman seated himself, the surgeon selected from his case of instruments the appropriate lancet, and then arranged some strips of sticking plaster on the table; after which, turning to him, he requested him to take off his coat and draw up his shirt sleeve, in order that he might take a few ounces of blood from him, which he assured him would afford immediate relief; whereupon the assistant deposited the basin and broom on the table, and stepped forward to aid the patient in divesting himself of his garment.

At the first intimation of the surgeon's intention the elderly gentleman began to smile, under the delusion that he was the

subject of a small practical joke, but the earnest manner of the other two quickly transferred the smile to the other side of his mouth, and caused him, in evident alarm, to jump off the stool on which he had been seated, and, seizing the same as a weapon of defence, to retreat to the other end of the room, where he commenced swinging the stool from side to side, exclaiming,—

‘I’m hanged if ye come any closer if I don’t let daylight into you in a jiffy. What the mischief are you going to murder me in this dark hole?’

Mr. Grumphy shook his head, and, fully impressed with the belief that they had a dangerous subject to deal with, he grasped the broom with the intent of using it as a foil whilst he rushed in to overpower him.

‘Stop,’ said the surgeon, holding the assistant by the arm, ‘let’s try gentle measures first;’ and then, addressing the stranger, he said, with an effort to be pleasant and gentle,—

‘Calm yourself, my dear sir; it’s highly injurious to a man in your state to become excited. Be seated, and allow me to ascertain the state of your pulse.’ Saying which, the surgeon made a step towards him, but as quickly retreated as the other raised the stool in a threatening attitude.

‘My pulse! what the mischief would ail my pulse? But, drat it, something soon will, stewed up in this room a fighting two such gaumless folk.’ And thereupon, still clutching the stool with one hand, he made ineffectual efforts to unbutton his waistcoat, overpowered by the heat.

‘Allow me,’ said the assistant, about to approach him, ‘I’ll help you take your coat off.’

‘Look’ee here, young man, if ye come one inch nearer, dang ye if I don’t mesh ye. Just thee come another step, and if I don’t draw the first blood my name’s not Kearas.’

‘Kearas!’ said the surgeon in a tone of surprise. ‘Kearas! —are you Mr. Kearas?’

‘Well, who would I be if I wasn’t?’

‘There’s some mistake here,’ said the surgeon, returning the lancet to its case.

‘I’m of the same opinion,’ said Mr. Kearas, resting a leg of the stool on the ground. ‘I’m not quite ready to be dessicated yet. You’ll have to get a substitution;’ at which saying he gave a hearty chuckle, but as this increased his sudorific state, he made a further attempt on his waistcoat, which he threw open after tearing thereat.

'A thousand pardons, Mr. Kearas. That will do, Mr. Grumphy.' Whereupon the assistant took up the basin and broom, and, closing the door after him, withdrew into the shop to ruminate over the morning's chapter of accidents.

'Be seated, sir. That stupid assistant of mine is always doing some foolish thing or other.'

'Ah, Mr. Scare, all through never having had the advantage of the superior culture afforded at my establishment.'

After a few further explanations and apologies on the part of the surgeon, the two settled down to a better understanding.

CHAPTER II.

PRODUCT OF TWO OF THE FACTORS—THE THIRD TEMPORARILY THROWN OUT.

‘DOCTOR,’ said Mr. Kearas, ‘I got your note at the Bull and Mouth last night, on my return from booking two fine lads for the ‘Cademy,—mortal fine boys they were, only requiring the edge putting on ‘em, and the finishing touch they’ll get at the ‘Cademy. Ah! Doctor, their payrents won’t know ‘em again in a few years;’ which was very probable, as will hereafter appear. ‘I’d ha’ been sooner, Doctor, only I was detained seeing ‘em off by the early stage, and which was very affecting, Doctor. It’s a very affecting sight to see loving payrents a parting with their tender offspring. Nothing but stern duty and the assurance of the payternal solicitude of myself and Mrs. K. for the dear children would enable them to endure it.’ Here the excellent gentleman commenced a search for his handkerchief, but as it had fallen under the stool he was not successful.

‘No doubt, no doubt,’ interrupted the surgeon, evidently unmoved by Mr. Kearas’ affecting relation, and somewhat impatient at his garrulity, which he endeavoured to stop by coming to the point for which the interview had been requested.

‘You are Mr. Kearas, the Yorkshire schoolmaster?’

‘I’m Mr. Kearas, the proprietor of the ‘Cademy well and favourably known as “The Hall,” near Bowes, Yorkshire.’

‘Yes, yes, they are all Halls up there,’ replied the surgeon in a depreciatory tone; ‘but’—

‘Grumbleby Hall, sir,’ interrupted Mr. Kearas, with an air of importance, as he drew out of his waistcoat pocket a large card, on both sides of which was printed a very elaborate description of situation, advantages, terms, and other particulars of the institution referred to; ‘and them’s the ‘ticklers thereof.’

‘You and I,’ said the surgeon, throwing the proffered card on the table without deigning a look thereat, ‘have had frequent

correspondence in our day, although this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you.'

'An' how d'ye like me?' said the schoolmaster, with a hearty 'Haugh ! haugh !' and which rather disturbed his balance on the rickety stool.

'Oh, very much, very much,' said the surgeon, slightly annoyed at the facetiousness of the schoolmaster.

'Everybody does, my dear Doctor ; quite unlike other men of my persuasion, carrying on the eddicating business ; there's summut in my outside external as impresses 'em at once.' Saying which Mr. Kearas took a cursory survey of his admired proportions, and then resolved into a complacent air.

'I'm quite of everybody's opinion, but'—

'I don't wonner ; you're a man of penetration, and I'm transparent and full of guile. Fair and square, round and plump,—them's my mottoes ; nothing underhand for me,' said Mr. Kearas, throwing back his coat and thrusting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat. 'I can't abide it.'

'Undoubtedly square and plump enough, in all conscience ; but, Mr. Kearas,' remonstrated the surgeon, 'I've a great deal to do this morning, and as you are considerably after time, let's proceed to business. You see, Mr. Kearas, you see'—

'Well, not very plain,' interrupted the schoolmaster, turning his head to look about the room, as yet unable to restrain a vein of pleasantry, said to run through most fat men. 'It's the darkest, dismallest place I've seen for many a day. Haugh ! haugh ! haugh !'

'You'll probably be in a worse yet,' muttered the surgeon, irritated at this disparaging allusion to his sanctum, and whereat Mr. Kearas subsided into a graver mood, and took a furtive glance around the room, evidently disturbed lest there might be a still gloomier inner chamber to which it would be possible to transfer a subject for chirurgical operations ; but, not discovering any outlet to such, he concluded the Doctor had only intended a bit of pleasantry in response to his own, and, recovering his equanimity, exclaimed,—

'Well, that's a joke.'

'What's a joke?'

'Why, that be.'

'I'm not joking, sir,—I'm not joking.'

'Ha ! ha ! I see, Doctor, you're one o' them that makes a joke when you don't know it.'

'But you mistake, sir. I don't make a joke, sir, when I don't know it. I never joke, sir;' and which was quite correct, and being very sharply uttered, tended to bring Mr. Kearas' hilarity to a close, and his puffy cheeks to assume as serious an aspect as they could, and, by way of recovering himself, he commenced another search for his handkerchief, which he at length discovered, and thereupon made an energetic assault on his nose; having done which he appeared to regain his composure.

'Mr. Kearas, about this boy?'

'Ah, Doctor, yes, about that boy. Well, as I were saying'—

'I am not aware, sir, of your having said anything about the boy; but you'll have the goodness to listen to what I am about saying. As I informed you in my note, he's about eight years old, small,—very small,—so that he'll not eat, nor wear'—

'But he's a-growing, Doctor, at that age, and'—

'Allow me to finish.'

'Oh, certainly. Beg pardon, but I were going to reminiscence you.'

'They say he's delicate,' exclaimed the surgeon in a louder key, to put down the interruption,—'they say he's delicate. So much the better,—an excellent opportunity; and, as his medical adviser, I prescribe Yorkshire air and hygienic treatment at the Hall,' laying a stress on the last word. 'They'll soon produce a change.'

'You may say that, Doctor; it always do. Every one's stout as leaves the 'Cademy, no odds how lean when he entered, old or young, rich or poor, learned or—well, they aren't that when they come, only when they go. Would you b'lieve, Doctor, I were once a mere skeleton?'

The surgeon looked incredulous, and shook his head.

'I was, though; and look at me now.' Saying which he slowly rose and spread out his arms, and took an admiring look at his huge dimensions, and, lest the surgeon should still prove incredulous, performed a rotund movement for his further inspection; after which, as he re-deposited himself on the stool, he added,—

'There was young Tripes, too, see how we did'—

'Mr. Kearas,' interposed the surgeon testily, 'I have not time to hear how you did for young Types.'

'Did for young Types! Tripes, sir, not Types. Never allow the boys to call nicknames. But bless me, Doctor, it 'ud ha' done ye good to ha' seen him; you wouldn't ha' knowed him again at the end of the first quarter.'

'Just so, just so,' exclaimed the impatient surgeon; 'and that's what I expect with this boy. I don't want to know him again, the first or the last or any quarter.'

'Oh, don't mistake, Doctor; I didn't mean to send him home before the *last* quarter,—it 'ud be too soon; he wouldn't have recovered.'

'Recovered! who asked you to recover him?—that's my business, not yours. Umph! in that respect, I am afraid, Mr. Kearas, you are not so successful as your competitors.'

This was said in a significant tone, but which the schoolmaster failed to comprehend, he being just then exceedingly concerned for the superior reputation of his establishment.

'Now, Doctor, you're too hard. I'd pit my boys agen the whole of them. There ain't a merrier, happier, healthier set o' lads in one o' them. They're of no account.' Perhaps, as far as the comparison went, the assertion held good.

'That's just it, and that's where I object,' said the surgeon, intending to make himself better understood; but, having got upon the character of his institution, Mr. Kearas was too absorbed in that *one* idea to be able just then to take in a second.

'And as to eddication, some of them lads 'ud beat 'em all hollow; and some on 'em, I almost think, 'ud beat me; and, 'sides, we're the only 'Cademy as teaches music. Ah, Doctor,'—and here Mr. Kearas assumed an enraptured air,—'you should hear my son, the younger Mr. Kearas,—he's fust-rate at music; you wouldn't find his beat nowhere,—he's sherrific. I'll tell you what, Mr. Scare, no boy should miss such a chance; and so, if you'll say ten shillings and sixpence a quarter extra,—that's the terms, you'll see 'em on the card there,—we'll teach him the clarinet, or the tambourine, and take the sixpence off.' And by way of carrying the surgeon by storm, in his musical enthusiasm he exclaimed, 'If you only heard him!'

Unable to restrain himself, he stretched out his arms and legs, and with his hands appeared to be clasping an imaginary instrument in connection with his mouth. It was wonderful to see how artistically the pulpy fingers ran over the invisible keys, whilst his cheeks, distended to twice their puffy size, his eyes tightly closed, and one foot drawn up beating time, he accompanied the movements of his fingers by his voice, in an alternately ascending and descending scale,—

'Too-to te ti tu tu tu tooty tum tum,
Tum te tu ti te to to tum tooo tooty.'

As soon as Mr. Kearas had exhausted himself by this faint illustration, as he termed it, of the musical abilities of the junior Kearas, he opened his eyes and looked triumphantly into the surgeon's face, with a felt consciousness that he had fully vindicated the unapproachable superiority of the Grumbleby musical talent.

Irritated beyond sufferance at this demonstrative proceeding, which he had endeavoured to check during its progress, the surgeon exclaimed, 'To the devil with your tooty tums, and your precious son in company with them !'

'Accompany them?' said the worthy schoolmaster, not yet returned to earthly thinkings. 'Of course my son accompanies them,—ah !' and he shook his ponderous head,—'ah, if you could only hear him play a soliloquy,—such heavenly strains !' saying which Mr. Kearas raised his face towards the black ceiling above, that being the direction in which the description of strains alluded to might be looked for, and was about to give another *faint* illustration, but, observing the indignant attitude of the surgeon, he instantly forbore, and instead applied his handkerchief to his neck and face, which, owing to his exertions, were bathed in perspiration ; then, after a short pause, during which the surgeon had paced up and down the room in great dudgeon, he demanded what he wished the boy taught 'besides the rudiments of the English language as spoken at his classical Academy, including ciphering, grammar, spelling, the arts and sciences,—and which of the latter? Would you prefer the sion of—of—You know the sions, sir?' It was a question if Mr. Kearas did.

'Eh?' replied the surgeon, who (his thoughts introverted on his own plans) had not attended to the schoolmaster's question. 'Eh? Know the Scions? do they go to your school?'

'Go to my 'Cademy?—course. They're all at my 'Cademy, and a wonderful lot o' them there are.'

'Mr. Kearas, will you attend?' said the surgeon, looking sternly at him. Mr. Kearas nodded assent. 'This boy is to be taught the same and nothing more than other boys, and to remain till he is sent for. Do you understand that, sir?'

'Perfectly, Doctor ; we always do keep them till they're sent for. Then you won't say the music?' Observing a gathering frown, he added hastily, 'Yes, I understand ; and on the same terms as the other lad?'

'Precisely ; and which reminds me that that boy will be with-

drawn soon, as he is old enough now to be placed in some occupation whereby he may learn to support himself.'

'Wonderful boy that, sir!—couldn't hold a candle to him! Brilliant talent; very slow at first; came out handsomely, though, by the indicative mood' (it is assumed this was the academical term for inductive mode). 'Going to make a surgery of him, I s'pose, eh, Doctor? Just the thing; he'll make a tip-topper—another Sir Ashley what's his name?

'No doubt, no doubt; but with reference to *this* boy, I'll send him to you at the Bull and Mouth.'

'No, no, Doctor;' and, fumbling in all his pockets, he drew out a printed card and handed it to the surgeon. 'There, send him there, to the Stockton and Shields Packet Company's wharf at Wapping, day after to-morrow, at eight o'clock, to be forwarded by the Stockton packet or smack which sails on that day; splendid accommodation,—far before the stage.'

'And cheaper?' replied the surgeon.

'And cheaper, decidedly. What's his name?'

'William Wilton.'

'William Wollton,' said the schoolmaster, as he pulled out a dilapidated, rusty pocketbook from his side pocket, and slowly inscribed the name over some former memorandum, and which for that reason when written was illegible. 'William—William—Welldone,' said he, endeavouring to read what he had written, as he re-deposited the book in his pocket,—'good name that.'

'You'll not forget, Doctor, the usual outfit,—towels, shirts, socks, boots, knife and fork, spoon, comb, brush, and shoe-horn,—it's all down there,' taking up the prospectus from the table and handing it to the surgeon. 'Six of each.'

'Six of each! six of each! You don't mean to say he'll want half-a-dozen shoe-horns?'

'Oh, bless me, no; it don't say so, do it?' referring to the card.

'What's this—parlour boarders?'

'Oh! why, you see, our terms are exceedingly low, including all the elements besides the higher branches of an English eddication, namely'—but, seeing the surgeon was about to protest against the recapitulation, Mr. Kearas only added, 'Boarded, washed, and no additional clothing required during the whole term, at the astonishing low charge of twenty pounds per annum, soap included; but then you see, while all sit down to a table loaded with the products of the season, some payrents prefer

paying a small addition, which entitles their boys to meal with the principal and professors, and partake of the luxuries.'

'Luxuries! luxuries!' ejaculated the surgeon.

'Yes, such as—such as'—Mr. Kearas appeared at a loss to enumerate—'parken pigs and flummery.'

'Tut, tut, such stuff! It's injurious to pamper boys. Plain food, sir.'

'As you say, Doctor; but you said he was delicate, in which case there may be some extras required.' Mr. Kearas, like certain other contractors, found such provisos in his agreements very advantageous, offering a broad margin whereby to make up deficiencies, especially such as arose from an occasional deadhead,—in other words, a boy whose affectionate parents, unable to longer endure the painful separation, and, having become largely in arrear, mysteriously disappeared, made away with themselves, leaving their encumbrances in the hands of the unfortunate pedagogue.

'Extras! extras! Oh, indeed!' said the surgeon, too 'cute to be overreached in a bargain. 'Extras! as many as you like, Mr. Kearas,—as many as you like.'

'Just so; very glad I mentioned it; I'll make a note of it at once, so as I'll mind to inform Mrs. K.;' and he again drew out his pocketbook.

'And note at the end that not one will be paid for.'

'Won't pay for?' said the schoolmaster, stopping short in his entry.

'No, not one.'

'Not any?'

'No.'

'Then there'll be none,' said he, closing his book; then, looking appealingly into the surgeon's face, still hoping to move him, for 'extras' was too important an item to surrender too easily, 'Suppose he's sick and requires a doctor?'

'I won't pay,' said the surgeon peremptorily.

'Bless me, shall I let him die?'

'You'd better not; but that's your business. You know which pays best. And as my time is expired,' looking at his watch, 'and I have my morning professional calls to make, you must excuse me.' Then, opening the door, he requested Mr. Grumphy's presence. 'Mr. Grumphy, you'll take young Wilton to the place this gentleman will tell you of, the day after to-morrow at eight o'clock. Good morning, Mr. Kearas.'

‘Oh, good morning,’ said Mr. Kearas, rising at this abrupt leave-taking, and shouting after him, ‘You’ll not forget the towels, shirts, boots, and’—but the surgeon was gone, and, opening a door in the passage that communicated with the stairs leading from the private street door to the rooms above, he took his hat and stick from their place in the hall, slammed the street door after him, and was off.

Left thus unceremoniously to themselves, for a few minutes the schoolmaster and assistant regarded one another without uttering a word. The announcement that had just been made to the latter had evidently come with an almost stunning effect, and as the person before him was in some way connected therewith, his piercing eyes were sternly searching that individual’s features, as though to discover his relation thereto.

Mr. Kearas made an effort to smile, but it died off to a painful expression, and, gradually recalling Mr. Grumphy’s late conduct, he began to experience sundry misgivings at finding himself thus alone with the uncouth man whose gaze was now so harshly rivetted on him. Mr. Kearas felt uncomfortable; he became nervous, and, fixing his eyes on him, and keeping at as great a distance as he could, slipped cautiously round to the door, shuffled across the passage, and hurried through the shop, his fears increasing as he went, and, grasping the handle of the shop-door, forced his way on to the street, before Mr. Grumphy, whose eyes had vacantly followed Mr. Kearas’ receding form, was aroused from his stupor to the fact that he was off. Starting at the sound of the door as it slammed back, he ran to the street, and shouted,—

‘Hallo! I say, Mr.—M—i—s—t—e—r,’ endeavouring unsuccessfully to recall the name, ‘hi! hi!’ But the louder Mr. Grumphy shouted, the more marvellously did the speed of the old gentleman increase. ‘Hi! Mr. Care—Mr. Queer—Mr. Queerass—hi!’

The schoolmaster looked back, and, catching a view of Mr. Grumphy’s telegraphy, made further desperate efforts to increase his speed; whereupon Mr. Grumphy gave a more prolonged shout, the effect of which, however, like the former, only tended to add to Mr. Kearas’ frantic efforts, and occasioned him to push aside one or two passengers who were praiseworthily endeavouring to stay his progress, under the impression that he was not aware of Mr. Grumphy’s anxiety for a conference, and finally, reaching the end of the street, he disappeared round the corner.

'The old porpoise!' muttered the assistant, as he returned to the shop and banged the door after him. 'The old idiot never told me the place. By George! think of that!' As this thought flashed on him, it appeared to inspire him with a renewed desire to communicate with Mr. Kearas, for, seizing his hat, he was about to rush out in pursuit, when he was stopped by the entrance of a woman requiring some bilious corrective, for which purpose the recent manufacture was expressly calculated, being anti-bilious.

As it was too late now to put his last purpose into execution, he fell into a reverie, broken by such ejaculatory sentences as, 'Well, if this ain't a go! Never told me a word where the place was that I'm to go to, nor anything about it—neither of them. They're a pair!'

Mr. Grumphy's hands disappeared under his coat tails, and he took a few slow marches up and down behind the counter. After a further silence, he renewed the conversation with himself,—a form of discourse he betrayed a decided preference for.

'Oh, well, if he didn't, he didn't, that's all; I don't see why I need bother about it. Let him go!' The little word 'go' seemed to fall ominously on his ear, for he halted as though reconsidering it, and presently repeated it slowly,—'Go! go!' Again he paused, and again uttered the word 'Go;' and in a tone in which a slight quiver might have been detected, he said, 'And so Petty's to go, eh?—at last!' Then, in a quick, sharp tone,—'But where to? With old Queerus, I s'pose. And where's he going? Why didn't the old jelly-bag wait till I'd got it out of him?' Then, resuming his walk, he ruminated again; then stopped, and, addressing the counter, or the articles on it, exclaimed, 'Here's a blow! What will I do *now*? what will *Aunt*y do? what will *Petty* do? Poor Willie! just like all the rest; go away, and stay away, and never, never see ye again.'

This thought appeared rather too much for him, and he stopped to forcibly swallow down—some remnant of the honey? No; something more difficult to dispose of, less gustatory,—there was a fly in the ointment. Strongly moved, he grasped the pestle, and threw it to the other end of the counter, where two or three phials of medicine were lying rolled in paper and addressed to sundry patients, alighting on one of which it disposed more quickly of the contents than the directions thereon intimated. 'Go it! crash away!' said the funny Mr.

Grumphy, who, instead of deploring the spoliation of his labours, appeared rather to enter into the spirit of the thing, and with an evident relish too, for, stepping over to the spot, he clutched the missile, now smeared and odorous of camphor and paregoric, and, raising it in the air, detained it there whilst he held a consultation as to his further proceedings, which looked very much in the direction of completing the work of devastation. 'For a farthing, I'd smash the whole of ye, I would !' and the pestle remained poised over his shoulder ; but as no one was at hand to proffer the requisite farthing, he contented himself with bringing it down with a thump upon the counter, and expressing a fervent wish that Mr. Kearas' head was in the mortar, in order that it might go through the process of pounding.

'Poor Willie ! little Willie ! and so you're to go—go—go ! Just as I— What do you want ?' said he in a gruff voice, as the doctor's boy entered, the designation by which the youth who delivered the medicines to the patients was termed, and whom Mrs. Scarr insisted on wearing grey livery. 'Here, take those away ; those two lying by themselves go to the Herberts in Bedford Square.'

The boy deposited the several papered phials and boxes in his basket, and left the assistant once more to his cogitations, and a continued ebullition that he would not have exhibited before a second person.

'Well, it's come to this, has it ? I knew it ! I knew it ! Scarr's a villain !—and I'm another ! yes, I'm another !'

Then he hesitated, as though the latter part of the assertion was being questioned, and he was bringing himself to account for so unqualified an avowal. Was it self-esteem ? There was little in the appearance and manner of that strange man to encourage such a thought ; and yet he hesitated, as though in expectation of some responsive confirmation from without before he ventured to confirm it himself ; but in default raised his hand, and, bringing his fist slowly and deliberately down on the counter, he exclaimed in measured tones, 'Yes—I—am—an—other !' and the heavy blow that testified to the depth of his conviction, once more started some empty phials into a vibration that seemed to indicate a tremulousness in the said phials, as though apprehensive of very soon sharing the fate of the cough mixture bottle. Mechanically placing them in a secure position, he raised his eyes, and they wandered over the shelves on the opposite side, until arrested by a large glass jar in

the corner, from the hermetically-sealed cork of which was suspended, in spirits, a diminutive object resembling a chubby, nude wax doll ; but then it couldn't be one, for they don't preserve wax dolls in spirits. As his eyes rested on the little oddity, they kindled up, and, addressing it, he exclaimed in louder voice,—‘Yes, I *am* another,—am I not? you!’ And he stretched out his hand towards it, and pointed his finger, as he reiterated the demand, conscious, it may be, that *it* could bear evidence to the truthfulness of the self-condemning words. ‘And if I wasn’t, would I stay here, and do all *his* dirty work for him?—eh? eh? you!’ But as the exosseous quiddity made no sign indicative of acquiescence, either by agitating the liquid or winking its eyelids, after a brief silence Mr. Grumphy flapped his hands rapidly on his breast, and took upon himself, as before, to decide the question. ‘I *am* another; but I won’t be any longer. I’ll go too; hang him! I’ll go too!’ And, under the influence of the feeling thus evoked, he commenced returning to their places the few shelf bottles about the counter, piled up the mortar, scales, pill-board and roller, and other articles, wiped down the counter, then his hands, and, throwing the cloth into the corner to repose with his apron and sleeves, flapped his chest once more, as though he had just come to a very commendable decision, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, resumed his promenade, occasionally turning abruptly towards some familiar object, and requesting to be informed if it had any objection to offer, or saw any just cause, why the engagement so long existing between himself and the surgeon should not terminate at once.

It must, however, be stated that the resolution just made was not original, inasmuch as it was not the first time Mr. Grumphy had arrived at the same point, although not from the same cause; but as he was still assistant to the surgeon, it will be readily concluded that second thoughts, or a second argument with the bottles and jars, including the preserved riddle in the corner, had resulted in a mutual understanding that the cause moving thereto might be overlooked this once,—just this once, that was all; but if it happened again,—look out. In which conclusion it is not considered that Mr. Grumphy acted differently from other wise men, who have, by an equally simple process, arrived at the same issue, and decided that, though the shoe pinched, it was better to let it pinch, even at the risk of an extra corn,—and that’s no trifle,—than have no shoe at all.

CHAPTER III.

VALUE OF THE THIRD FACTOR BY ANALYSIS.

MR. BRIAN GRUMPHY, in disposition and habits was not only retiring, but, as has been partly intimated, gloomy even to sullenness, and solitary even in society; though in this latter he was rarely found, too unsociable either to enter or be welcomed there. In his intercourse with those with whom his duties necessarily brought him in contact, he was sharp and hard,—sharp, because a rough experience had taught him that was the way to take care of number one, for whom no one else appeared to care; hard, it may be, because he had scarcely ever known any other than an indurating influence, valuable to himself, inasmuch as in his employer's often equivocal practice, it required a heart encased in a double gutta-percha covering to resist any pitying or other impulse that might otherwise inopportunately move it, and which, indeed, in earlier days had moved it, and moved it violently too; but that was past, and he was now case-proof to all such emotional experiences,—at least, as he and even others thought. But, strange perversity, something had passed the wary sentinel that kept 'watch and ward' over the citadel, and so taken possession of at least a corner thereof, that, as just evidenced by his proceedings, it had even awakened a dormant pity, if not something akin to love, hitherto crouched out of reach, as it seemed, in the said corner of that heart, but against the operation whereof he was now continually striving, but striving in vain; for, with the same stubbornness wherewith he had held out against the assault, he now as tenaciously, though involuntarily, clung to the little that had contrived to steal in.

As some extenuation of this perverseness, it should be stated that the object who thus engrossed the affection Mr. Grumphy was unconscious of possessing, until realized in this surreptitious

way, had only secured possession thereof after a protracted siege, and through a very small breach, previously made and long neglected; and which the circumstance of his residing under the same roof, and being constantly in communication with the assaulted, afforded facilities for effecting an entrance not otherwise available. But it was not without alarm that Mr. Grumphy became aware that Willie Wilton had got into his heart, right through the gutta-percha, and was nestling there so cosily, that he could not for the life of him drag him out, as in his more selfish, calculating seasons he felt it would be for his comfort as well as interest to do, and resolved at times he *would* do; and in pursuance of which determination he would for a day or two most resolutely shut himself up in his own room, whilst at his lodgings, insensible to the endearing appeals at the door, until, the humour past, and no longer able to resist the poundings of those little fists, and the plaintive pleadings of that musical little voice, responded to, as it would be, by a voice within, he would break down all of a heap, and, throwing the door open, catch the laughing child in his arms, when such a hugging and squeezing ensued, as threatened both with a speedy collapse, should it last a minute longer. Had this come to the cognizance of the surgeon, it would have ruined him in that gentleman's estimation, as he depended much on the aid of a man such at he conceived the assistant had become under his training. But Mr. Grumphy was too much alive to his own interests not to be well aware that any exhibition of such feeling would materially affect those interests, and therefore was ever careful to guard against any display thereof, and which required no effort, as his cold, unimpressible nature was not likely to be affected by ordinary occurrences. His chief ambition was to emulate his employer, in whom he never remembered to have witnessed any weakness of the sort, his professional stoicism being proof against such effeminacy.

Such was Mr. Grumphy in natural disposition, or, more correctly, as force of circumstances had made him. As to his origin, he was a waif cast upon the world at an early age, but for what especial purpose, or in what manner and by whom, these were questions which in his lone hours he had often endeavoured to puzzle out, but with no satisfactory result or other conclusion, than that it was in order to serve an apprenticeship to Dr. Scarr, who was associated with his earliest recollections, and to whom he had become so valuable, that, at the expiration of

his indenture, he had been advanced to the more responsible position of assistant, though this must be understood as referring more to his duties as a dispenser of medicines than to those of a professional character, for which he was not eligible, his education being restricted to a few old medical treatises and a pharmacopœia, and such Latinity as needful for one in his situation. From his dependent position and complete subjugation to the will of the surgeon, coupled with his natural reticency,—a very valuable qualification in an employee of Dr. Scarr's,—he had become of great service to the latter, to whom he was therefore, though in a different sense than usually understood in the profession, essentially an assistant, and as such employed on all confidential occasions, and in the execution of professional services that materially aided in reducing him to his own callous standard.

It has just been said that Mr. Grumphy was always unsuccessful in his endeavours to trace his own beginnings to any satisfactory conclusion ; it should, however, be added in abatement, that he had stumbled upon one or two ideas in reference thereto, though he was not clear that he had not first dreamt them or fancied them, they were so indistinct and incoherent, but still they were there. One of these fancies, however, had taken so permanent a hold in his mind, that he had settled it as a fact, that when small—so very small that it appeared to him he could not have been much bigger than the specimen in the glass jar—he used to sit on somebody's knee, jogged up and down, crowing and laughing at another little somebody about the same size as himself, and who was jogged on the opposite knee, and that the jogging generally wound up by the two falling into each other's arms, and, after an energetic hugging, both coming to the ground with a bump that terminated the hugging. And then, though he was not quite so certain about that, but it was part of the dream or the pleasing fancy, he thought they called the toodles on the opposite knee Missy or Sissy, but whether that meant sister he was undecided, at least in his earlier thinkings ; but latterly it had assumed a clearer image, and he was strongly disposed to the belief that he once had a sister, though, as the said terms were very generally applied to little feminines, they might have implied nothing more than it was not a boy.

So reasoned Mr. Grumphy in his solitary, dreamy hours, especially whilst indulging in a pipe, which he did immoderately. It was the only solace Mr. Grumphy appeared to have, and it

was on these nightly occasions that he went through the process of reasoning that, at the close of the first pipe, brought him to the foregoing conclusion, and which the second, aided by his potations, confirmed; for then, during the more somnolent puffing, his eyes gazing into vacancy, a little form would rise out of the bowl of the pipe in baby drapery, and, coiling round with the wreathing smoke, indistinctly at first, would gradually assume the old familiar shape, until, perched on the mantelpiece, there they were, the same chubby cheeks, the small twinkling eyes, and the plump little paws,—so real, that finally, with a chuckling crow, it would make its old dive right down upon his neck, and thereby cause an involuntary start, that, as it usually sent the stem of the clay pipe beyond the waxed end, of course occasioned the little jade to disappear for that evening. It was this ever-recurring memory, with its awakening emotions, that contributed in no small degree to the influence so evidently exercised over the assistant by the child Willie Wilton, and was the small breach above alluded to that facilitated his entrance.

But who was Willie Wilton? and how came he into the position to hold this relation to one who ignored all *present* relationship with the terrestrial family, claiming affinity as he did with none other than the entity above alluded to?

It is a proverb, and, as a rule, a truism, that ‘the child is father to the man,’ and which, consequently, very satisfactorily settles the paternity of the man; but who the father of the child is, does not seem to have been so clearly laid down, or the question so readily disposed of; indeed, as though to demonstrate the perplexity attending such an inquiry, placed among the abstruse problems, we find a counter proverb, asserting that, whilst any fool of a child may know his own mother, it takes a wiser one to identify his father.

The blooming, blushing girl that at the altar places her hand in that of her affianced, whilst she fondly believes that she has entered the portal of a felicity, dreamt, talked, and sung of in visions of the night, along the lone lovers’ walk, or ‘mid the social or more festive circles, does not deem the cup of bliss to be full until a further pledge of love adds to the coveted name of wife, the one that opens a newer fountain in her heart, and whence gushes the full force of her loving nature,—that of mother. ‘Give me children or else I die,’ was the impetuous demand of the childless Rachel; and does not the instinctive, universal fondness of girls for baby dolls re-echo the passionate outburst of

Israel's favourite wife, and justify the transposition of the proverb first quoted, or at least its equal application to them, in the words, 'The girl is mother to the woman'? With what matronly pride she stands a second time at the altar, to register, in baptism, the little Benoni, nay, rather call it Benjamin, 'the child of the right hand,' in whom, in giving it a precious existence, she has consummated her own happiness, nor doubts she has merited the approbation of every soul to whom the announcement thereof shall be made.

No such proud, happy, loving mother ever thus presented Willie Wilton at the baptismal font, nor did any ponderous, well-filled chronicle of such events record the birth or register the parentage of Willie Wilton. True, there was a glimmer, a scintillation, of his earliest entrance on life's travel, and there were those whose testimony could supply, by *visû voce* evidence, the missing link; but they were dumb. And so a shroud of mystery obscured the event; and the glimmer, made less distinct by the medium through which it came, was only sufficient, on one solitary night some eight years prior to the opening of this story, to do as it had done on other such occasions, very weakly, very faintly, and without falling on any other than Dr. Scarr's assistant, to light that individual through the streets and by-ways of London to a narrow lane in which a well-known inn was situate, and whereat western mails and stages were continually arriving and departing, and there, on the arrival of a stage-coach, Mr. Grumphy received from the arms of a coarse, country-looking woman a little bundle, and which little bundle was transferred by him to a wet nurse in the immediate vicinity, who thenceforth nourished and reared the little bundle, or more correctly the contents thereof, in consideration of a weekly payment therefor, until able to creep on all-fours; when, on another dark night,—the appropriate season for such dark deeds,—Mr. Grumphy, probably with the design of destroying all clue, again transferred the bundle, somewhat enlarged, and during its sleep, to the keeping of another person, with whom he had become acquainted from her residing in the same house in which he rented an apartment.

All this had been done under the direction of the surgeon, who, on the night of the arrival of the stage, himself accompanied the woman, and saw to the transfer of the bundle to the assistant, to whom he gave strict and more than ordinary particular instructions as to its careful treatment, and directed the child to

be thenceforth called William Wilton. Another female, evidently much younger and of a very different station in life, but too closely veiled and muffled to be identified, emerged from the stage at the same time as the other two passengers, and, after caressing the babe with great warmth and evident strong feelings, was conducted, with much consideration, by the surgeon to a coach in waiting, and which drove off rapidly to the place indicated, in an under tone, by that gentleman.

Such is the little that, in a moment long subsequent of unusual and never-repeated confidence, the child's present guardian (a woman!) had been enabled with great adroitness to worm out of the assistant. In tracing his history, as purposed in the subsequent pages of this book, something further may be gleaned tending to extend the glimmer, and, if not more clearly to elucidate the mystery, at least to widen its area.

It was whilst in charge of this second female, with whom, from residing under the same roof, Mr. Grumphy necessarily came frequently in contact, that the child, as intimated, had crept on all-fours into his heart; only fully realized, as, one Sunday evening, seated in her room, drawn thither by the talismanic influence insensibly operating on his stern sensibilities, the boy had mounted astride his foot as he sat cross-legged, and, swaying up and down, suddenly clasped his tiny arms around the assistant's leg, and repeated several times in infantile endearing tones, '*Pa-pa, Willie's—own—dear—dear—papa.*' Mr. Grumphy had nearly lost his balance and toppled himself over, as he did the child, but whom he instantly picked up, and, like a huge mass of contradiction as he was, lifted right up to his broad chest and squeezed and kissed away the rising tear, whilst the little soft arms in response folded his neck, and the roseate lips began kissing that rough face all over. Something so absolutely new was knocking at his heart,—so like the old long-ago feeling and cherished memory,—that Mr. Grumphy could not stand it, and, alarmed at the overpowering sensation, he hastily set the child down, seized his hat from the chair, and, hurrying out of the room, strode down the stairs and into the street, under the full persuasion that he had made an animal of himself, and had done a very wrong thing. He was at the end of the street before his perturbation had calmed down, and then he was flapping his breast unmercifully.

Presently, as he hurried on, he was revolving the words that had originated this commotion. '*Pa—called me pa, dear pa—poor Willie, little fellow!*' and then he stopped and bought an

orange at an apple stall, and put it into his pocket, with an undefined intention of allowing it to be rifled thereof by the object of his commiseration on his return; whereupon he resumed the thread of his thoughts. 'Pa! why shouldn't he call him pa? he hadn't any other;' and by the time he had returned to the house, he had nearly reached the conclusion that he ought to assume the paternity. Mr. Grumphy was quite innocent of the consequences of any such assumption,—not that the avowal would have made much difference, or affected the estimation in which he was already held by his next-door or opposite neighbours, because, with the same discernment as most neighbours in all such cases, Mr. Grumphy's relationship to Willie had been already decided for him. It was too glaring, too evident, and withal too spicy a bit to escape handling; and so such consanguinity had been already defined without necessitating his concurrence. The old lady opposite knew from the first that he was the father, before it was further confirmed by a lodger in the same house, who assured her the likeness was striking, and which was true to the extent that both had eyes, nose, and other facial requisites; but as Mr. Grumphy had not a wife, and was not a widower, it did not speak well for him, to say the least. 'But then what could be expected from a *man*, and *such a man*!' But they *were* surprised how one pretending to such correctness, and who assumed to be so shocked at vice, as the religious Miss Austen, could live in the same house with such a character, and especially take charge of the unfortunate proof of his lapsed morals; it did not look well. But as the little light, and to its extent reliable, that has been afforded, has enabled the reader to know more than Mr. Grumphy's sagacious neighbours, we shall decline following them in their charitable mode of elucidation, and return to where we began.

At the conclusion of Mr. Grumphy's afore-mentioned resolve to abruptly terminate his connection with the surgeon, followed by the timely debate as to consequences, and ending in the same determination as heretofore, to defer the matter for future consideration, he hoisted himself on to the counter, and commenced drumming his heels against the front thereof, at the conclusion of which he picked up a cork, and in an abstracted manner began pulling it to pieces, and shooting the fragments with his finger and thumb at the bottles opposite; during which amusement his countenance resolved into a cheery aspect, and eventually, as he threw the last piece of cork, he broke out with

a 'Pish! what's it to me? what need I care? he may send 'em all to Botany Bay if he likes!—Care?'

Then he leaped down and commenced another promenade, apparently quite relieved by this new view of the situation, for he flapped his breast very heartily. Arresting his steps at the lower end, he looked across the passage into the surgery, the door of which had been left open upon Mr. Kearas' precipitate exit therefrom, and, after a brief pause, during which he seemed to be staring at some impalpable object within the dark room, he raised his voice, and in defiant and bantering tones exclaimed, 'What's up now?—What are ye up to, Sawbones?' and he hesitated as though awaiting a response.—'Won't tell *me*, eh?—tell *me*!—O no; I'd blab—who to? I wonder who to'—another pause—'Oh! ah! yes, of course I would; and of course you've no confidence in me, no right to,—I'd betray you.' This last was said in a sarcastic tone, and then, as he turned on his heel, he approached the opposite counter, and, striking it fiercely, said, with his teeth clenched, 'It's a lie;' faced the room again, and shook his fist as he peered into it and shouted, 'It's a lie.—'If I did,'—turning round to the preserved monstrosity on the shelf as he strode towards it, and gazed on it with a savage glare,—'If I did!—I could;' and gave a significant nod as he repeated deliberately,—'I could,'—and stopped short as his eyes wandered from the jar to other recognised entities around. Presently he turned round and leaned against the side of the arched way as if buried in thought, then put his hand into his pockets and walked backwards and forwards, and said in calmer tone, 'Well, never mind; it's all the same a hundred years hence, and perhaps sooner. We're both in the same boat—like master, like man—chip of the old block; and a precious one you are, old Skinflint;—they'd rise early that would get to windward of you. Well, we'll both sail on, and sink or swim together.' Mr. Grumphy was wafting himself back to his normal state. 'And he's right. Would they make use of him if they could help it? It's risky, and he's plucky; and if he takes the risk to save others, he's a right to his pay!—Pay?' A new thought: 'I wonder what he's going to get for this job. Sold him to old, old what-ye-call-him-Scarecrow. What would he want him for? it's not much he'll ever make of that boy,—he's too weakly, too mawkish, he's only fit—eh? abusing the lad!' His voice assumed an upbraiding tone: 'What harm's he done you, Mr. Grumphy?—He deserves it from you, don't he?—and he going to—going to'— Mr. Grumphy's

old love was fast welling up again at the thought of the coming trial, but instantly, and by a strong effort, he dismissed the rising feeling, and called to his aid such philosophy as he was master of, and that was but little ; his blunted perceptions and callousness not being referable to his proficiency in that branch of ethics, natural or moral. 'It has to be done, and I'll do it ; I'd like to know, though, where he's going to.'

It occurred to him that possibly there might be some clue to this desired information in the surgery, and, wondering it had not occurred to him before, he stepped in, and, looking around, picked up the card Mr. Kearas had given the surgeon relative to the packet boat, and perused it two or three times, satisfied it had some reference to the disposal of the boy.

'Umph, going to send him to sea, out of the country !'

As Mr. Grumphy's education in geography as well as other meaner branches had given place to the higher study of his professional dog-Latin, he was not aware of the maritime position of the place stated. Had it been Gravesend, or Richmond, or even Margate, just then much in vogue as watering-places for Cockneys during the summer season, there would have been no difficulty in identifying the locality, but he had never before heard of Stockton-on-the-Tees, and therefore, if he had located it anywhere it would have been in China, in reference to the latter word ; but as that would have been a hazard, as he was equally uncertain whether this latter place was not in the neighbourhood of France, he wisely refrained.

Mr. Grumphy threw down the card and returned to the shop, with the laudable intent of doing as he was told, and ask no questions ; and thereupon began to prepare himself for the inevitable, satisfied that his inflexible employer was impervious to any appeal on the plea of tender age, or any other plea save personal and pecuniary interest ; and that the present proceeding must have been considered and pre-arranged, from the circumstance of his being prepared and awaiting the visit of the party to whom the child was about to be consigned ; and also the result of causes known to himself and his employer.

Beyond an occasional inquiry, and reiterated caution to take particular care of the child, when advancing the monthly board, the surgeon had never interested himself about the boy. That he was in frequent communication with others on the subject, there were occasional evidences to prove. But, however inexplicable and unexpected this disposal of the boy was, it would in

no other case have called forth any astonishment or more than a passing thought from the assistant ; and therefore, from being so very exceptional, evidenced his unwonted interest in the lad.

As Mr. Grumphy always dined at the adjoining tavern, that he might not be out of the way of his duties longer than absolutely necessary, he did not return to his lodgings until the evening, and, despite his resolutions, as frequently upset as made throughout the day, the object of this controversy seemed to be continually pressing nearer to his heart, thereby rendering him sadly conscious of the powerful hold it had obtained.

No longer able to endure the suspense, he closed the shop an hour earlier than usual, and was just in the act of starting, when Dr. Scarr entered, and requested his presence in the surgery, first entering some prescriptions in the day-book which were to be made up that evening. Taking up the lamp on the counter, he passed into his room, followed by the assistant, whom, as he closed the door, he motioned to a seat. It was his wont, when about to give instructions concerning any transaction of a questionable nature, to convey his wishes in language that, whilst it would render those instructions barely comprehensible, would be the less likely to compromise himself. Mr. Scarr had perfect confidence in himself, none in any one else ; and though the duty on which he was often engaged compelled him to have recourse to the assistance of Mr. Grumphy, he deemed it wiser policy to mystify him. The case in hand did not appear to require any very unusual caution, and yet so many strange issues had occurred from trivial events in the course of his practice, that he was suspicious of everything, and acted accordingly. The surgeon took up a medical work, and appeared to be engaged in considering the information contained under some particular diagnosis, but suddenly raised his eyes to the assistant's face with a searching gaze, intending to take him off his guard, and if possible read what he would not be quick enough to conceal ; but as this was not an unusual trick with the surgeon, Mr. Grumphy was quite prepared, and nothing was detected. Whereupon the surgeon threw down the book, and, addressing him, observed,—
‘ You understood me this morning, Mr. Grumphy ? ’

Now the latter, though ever an admirer of the surgeon's abilities, which he especially desired to emulate, was at times posed by the adroit mode in which that gentleman would shy off from a subject in hand, just at the very moment when another word or two was all that was wanting to elucidate it, and which

at times necessitated a somewhat enigmatical style of conversation, very trying to Mr. Grumphy's imagination. In order, therefore, to avoid any apparent obtuseness of apprehension, he had adopted a process of his own, not always successful, by which he parried the inuendo style of his model, and occasionally compelled a more direct and explicit communication of his meaning. By adopting a similar course on the present occasion, he hoped to succeed in drawing from the surgeon as much information as, coupled with any other stray pieces he could scrape thereto, would enable him, by Mr. Kearas' system, the inductive process, to come so near the facts as to obtain sufficient data to make out the rest. It was in pursuance of this intent, immediately suggesting itself as a countervail to the surgeon's tactics, that Mr. Grumphy made answer,—

'Perfectly, sir;—an avowal that rather appeared to militate against the end proposed, and preclude the necessity for any further explanations on the part of the surgeon; but the assistant knew his man, who replied,—

'Oh, that's all right; then you'll attend to it—you'll attend to it, Mr. Grumphy;' and, drooping his eyes, rose, as a signal that the conference was concluded.

'I've done so, sir,' responded the assistant, also rising.

'Eh!' said the surgeon in surprise, and turning sharply towards him. 'Surely not—not to-day, Mr. Grumphy?'

'Yes, sir, I sent them this morning.'

'Sent what?' said the surgeon, opening his eyes to their full extent.

'The pills to Mrs. Hawkes.'

'The pills?' Hang the pills!' said the surgeon.

'Oh! ah! the draught. O yes, you said, if you remember, that Mrs. Herbert'—

'To the mischief with Mrs. Herbert and her draught! Will you let me speak, sir?' said the surgeon testily, as he saw Mr. Grumphy was about in all probability to name the destination of another aperient or analogous compound.

The assistant relapsed into a puzzled appearance, quite satisfied that his object was being gained.

'You are very dense this evening, or something else, Mr. Grumphy,' laying a stress on the last words. Mr. Grumphy looked as though he was injured. 'About that child, sir?'

'About the child,' repeated the assistant slowly, as though endeavouring to recall some particular decoction of the anti

class for a child that he might have overlooked; then looked very gravely into the surgeon's face, and asked, 'Was it Dalby's carminative or vermifuge?'

Beginning to lose control of his temper, the surgeon surveyed him from head to foot, whilst the assistant stood passively enduring the inspection without betraying any semblance of disturbance.

'Your memory's failing, Mr. Grumphy.' This was said sarcastically.

'I can remember some things, sir,' retorted the assistant, laying an undue emphasis on the monosyllable 'some' that seemed to take the surgeon by surprise, and who thereupon contracted his brows and looked into his face with a keenness that seemed to be once more endeavouring to read him through. As this, however, did not in the least disconcert the wary assistant, or cause the slightest modification of his blank features, whereby his interrogator could construe any special meaning to be attached to the reply, he concluded it was only a natural vindication of the extent of his memory, although it did not claim to go further than the surgeon's words seemed to imply, and who thereupon resumed,—

'There was only *one* thing, Mr. Grumphy, that I asked you to trouble your memory with to-day, so that your forgetfulness does not argue much for its increasing strength. As, however, it has evidently escaped you, I will refresh it by reminding you that you were directed to convey the boy Wilton on Monday to—to'—and here the doctor was getting at fault himself, and began searching in all his pockets. 'Dear me, what did I do with the card he gave me?' Now the card was lying where Mr. Grumphy had thrown it, after studying its contents, in a dark part of the room, but it was no part of Mr. Grumphy's plan to assist the surgeon, and so he left him to fumble around. 'Where did he say? Never mind, it's some wharf in Tooley Street. No! Tooley Street, did I say? Thames Street I think it was. Ah, yes! Thames Street, whence the packets sail for—for some place or other; and you'll take the boy there, if you please, on Monday morning at eight o'clock.' This information had been conveyed in a lowered and milder tone, occasioned doubtless by a consciousness that he was not coming out of the matter more creditably than his assistant.

'I understand, sir, I'm to take Willie to a wharf in Thames Street, where the ships sail from, to Botany Bay' (as the penal

portion of the Australian Colonies was then familiarly designated).

'To Botany Bay!' said the amazed surgeon. 'What the deuce would you do that for?'

'Didn't you say so?'

'No, sir; no, sir; he's going to—to—where the mischief is the place?' He closed his eyes. 'To where those schools are in the north of England. Oh, Yorkshire, Yorkshire,—that's the place,' opening his lids to the usual half-way. 'I'm getting oblivious too, Mr. Grumphy;' and he smiled.

'And who'll I say sent him?' said the assistant, taking advantage of the smile,—*'Dr. Scarr?'*

'No, no! Mr.—what's his name, the man that was here this morning,—that fat donkey, the schoolmaster; he told you his name.'

'O yes,—Scarrass—Mr. Scarrass,' said Mr. Grumphy, as though his memory had been suddenly refreshed.

Mr. Scarr opened his eyes suspiciously on the assistant, doubtful of some hidden or sinister meaning, or it might be personality, in Mr. Grumphy's pronunciation, but not detecting any, he thrust his fingers under his wig and tried to stir up his cerebral. The fact was, any defect of memory was very unusual in the surgeon, and can only be accounted for on the supposition that either his irritability or the assistant's stolid manner and unusual slowness of apprehension had unhinged the doctor's powers too.

'I have it,' said the surgeon,—*'I have it now,—Kearas; you'll remember that now, Mr. Grumphy,—Kearas. You'll ship him in Mr. Kearas' name to—'* At that moment his eyes fell on the card on the floor, and, possessing himself thereof, after reading it he placed it in the assistant's hand,—*'There, that's it, by the Stockton smack from Wapping;'* and which was the extent of the information the surgeon had originally intended to impart, but, owing to the assistant's adroit proceeding, had elaborated to nearly the amount required.

Mr. Grumphy perused the card, this time with a clearer understanding of its meaning than on the first reading, and then with apparent indifference remarked, 'I'll see all's right, and have his box packed ready; and,' as if suddenly recollecting, 'I suppose I'll just address a card and nail it on the box so as it may not go astray,—Master W. Wilton—what place in Yorkshire?'

But this time the surgeon was more guarded, and replied, 'No place, sir; his name is sufficient.'

'Oh, certainly, of course,' said the assistant; 'as he's going in the smack, there'll be no fear of losing it, especially as Mr. Queerass is to be in charge.'

'Kearas in charge!' exclaimed the surgeon; 'the captain's in charge, and you will deliver boy and box to him.'

'Very well, sir; and *he's* to forward him to Mr. Kearas' school at Stöckton?' continued the persistent assistant.

'No, no! to forward him to Kearas at Bowes, near Barnard Castle;' but, recollecting himself, he said testily, 'Put nothing on the box but his name.'

In all this there did not appear any particular reason for such vagueness, but it was a part of the Doctor's policy, by which course he hoped to obliterate certain too perceptible marks, and, by breaking the clue here and there, to render it more difficult to trace its continuity.

'Anything else, sir?' said the assistant.

'Nothing, nothing,' said the surgeon, as he passed through the passage and ascended the stairs, not over satisfied with himself; but which was the reverse with Mr. Grumphy, who stood some few minutes flapping his sides at a desperate rate, and in a state of great self-appreciation at his success. Without paying any regard to the prescriptions, he extinguished the lamp and shop lights, seized his hat, locked the doors, and, issuing from the side entrance, hurried off in the direction of his lodgings in St. Martin's Lane.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BIRD SHOP AND THE BIRDIE.

ON the right-hand side of St. Martin's Lane, entering from the Strand, about half-way up, was an old fusty, dingy bird shop. Outside the door were hung from the jambs, one above the other, wire and wicker cages, containing melancholy linnets, finches, canaries, and a host of other birds, native and foreign ; whilst on each side the doorway, piled up in tiers, were old boxes, with wooden bars in front, in which were white rabbits with pink eyes, or a few guinea-pigs, with whom the ferrets in the opposite box were making untiring efforts to become acquainted. The most attractive, however, appeared to be a small round cage of white mice, whose little feet kept their wire prison revolving at a rapid rate, probably under the delusion that they were rushing off somewhere. On the inside of the shop were old rusty pyramid cages containing pigeons or hawks ; and here and there a metal cage, with a noisy screeching parrot, suspended from the ceiling, at each scream causing a sleepy owl, perched on a wooden bracket, to open and blink its eyes. A motley collection of stuffed specimens were fastened to sprigs and brackets, in all manner of attitudes, around the shelves and in the window, at whose fate the live stock were apparently so affected, that they seemed to have come to a tacit understanding for a general mourning, notably expressed in the unnatural silence of so many songsters, the only sounds uttered being those of one of the aforesaid parrots, who, as he cocked his eye at the moping owl, seemed bent on keeping him awake until he had responded to the inquiry, as put in the tragic story of the renowned cock-robin, and informed him 'who saw them die.' But the Minervian bird, too affected to reply, only opened one eye alternately, winked, and closed it again. At this attractive aviary the youth of the neighbourhood got their first lessons

in ornithology, and thereafter continued the pursuit of their favourite study, interrupted only by a Bow Street official or street keeper.

Within a door or two of this shop was a tenement, the upper part of which was let out in apartments; a side street door, mostly on the jar, opened upon the stairs. It was to this house, one of the rooms in which he tenanted, that Mr. Grumphy wended his way on issuing from the surgery, as related in the foregoing chapter. St. Martin's had just struck ten as he turned the corner of May's buildings, and as the sound fell on his ear he slackened his pace, and by the time he reached the door had subsided into a slow step. Deeply occupied by his conflicting thoughts, he passed on to the bird-fancier's, which was still open, it being Saturday night, before he was aware that he had passed his own door, whereupon he turned back, and was about pushing it open, when, withdrawing his hand, he turned round, pulled down his collar from his ears, and thrust his hands into his pockets, and looked across the street and inspected the windows of the opposite house, unconscious that he was himself undergoing a very minute inspection by the old lady before mentioned, who happened at the same time to be peeping on one side the blind to discover anything worth dreaming about before retiring to bed, and thereupon delayed her intention that she might ascertain the reason for Mr. Grumphy's unusual proceedings.

'What's a matter with me to-night?' soliloquized Mr. Grumphy. 'If that ain't queer, to pass the house and not know it!' and he attempted a laugh, but that being foreign to his nature, it died off. 'It's late, I think, and he'll be in bed, so I'll go up. Pugh, how close it is,—enough to suffocate one!' This was said as he began to approach the staircase, and, taking off his hat, commenced fanning himself. Halting at the foot of the stairs, he replaced his hat on his head, and listened. The stillness seemed to affect him, and, turning round, he was about to return to the door, when a girl at that instant came tripping into the passage from the street, and in the dark bumped against the assistant. She uttered a suppressed 'O mercy! what's that?' and ran back to the door.

'Halloa! come on, gal; what are you afraid of?' exclaimed Mr. Grumphy, arresting her in her flight.

'O dear! is that you, Mr. Grumphy? How you startled me!' said the girl, as she cautiously returned and ran up the stairs with accelerated speed.

'I'm a fool! or else I'm sick;' and hereupon he felt his pulse. It beat more rapidly than it was wont, but not sufficiently so to induce him to assume that he was sick, so he preferred the alternative, and decided that he was a fool, and, clapping his sides to recover his wits, commenced ascending the stairs. His own room was on the first landing, but, passing it, more instinctively than intentionally, he reached the second landing before he stopped; he listened a minute, and, oppressed by his thoughts, drew a heavy breath and sighed, then rousing himself, exclaimed, 'Fool!' and went up to the first door, and gave a hard knock with his knuckles. There was no response, as at other times, of 'Come in;' but just as he was about repeating the knock, the door was opened by a quiet, smiling, middle-aged woman, habited in a plain but neatly-made cotton dress, her hair gathered under a small cap, except three short curls that hung over each temple; a muslin handkerchief, passing over her shoulders, was pinned to her waist before and behind.

Mr. Grumphy glided to a seat on an old box covered with a piece of figured cotton print, probably having once done service as a gown, and sat silently, with his head bowed, for the soft, gentle voice proceeding from a little boy, kneeling in his night-gown at the further end of the room, by the side of a cot, intimated that he was breathing forth his evening prayer.

'And, dear Jesus, bless Mr. Grumphy,—and keep him,—and bless him,—and make him a good man,—and bless Aunty,—and bless me,—and take care of us all, all night long,—and dear Mary, for ever and ever. Amen.'

It was not the first time the assistant had heard a similar prayer from the same lips, but somehow to-night it seemed all new; and as he heard his own name presented to Heaven by that child, he was almost unmanned, and forthwith commenced a very earnest examination of the lining of his hat, as though he had never previously remarked that it was of leather. But the conclusions that might have resulted from the acquisition of this addition to his knowledge of hat trimming were rudely interfered with, for, as the little fellow rose from his knees, and turned round to ascertain who had entered the room during his orisons, his eyes fell on the still bent form of the assistant, and, holding up his night-dress, and signing to the female not to speak, he stepped lightly round, climbed on the chair behind, and threw himself on Mr. Grumphy's back, clasping his arms around his neck. The assistant dropped his hat, and, as the

child twirled round on to his knees, he yielded to his suppressed feelings, and clasped him to his breast, and, in response to the continued embrace, kissed his soft round cheeks again and again, repeating the name, 'Willie.'

The boy patted his cheeks, and then pressed them together with his chubby hands, until he rendered his features so additionally ugly, that he burst into a merry laugh, and called upon the female, whom he addressed as Auntie, to 'look, look, if Mr. Grumphie wasn't like the green parrot in the bird shop, only his nose turned the wrong way!' And then he stood up, and tried to coax Mr. Grumphie's hair into a horizontal position, but which always returned to the vertical; and so, giving it up, he rubbed his wee nose against Mr. Grumphie's nasal, and in a semi-upbraiding tone inquired, 'Why didn't ye come sooner? I waited ever so long for you, and Auntie let me stay up.'

'Sooner! What did you want me sooner for?—You don't care about me?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Get along, you little monkey! what would make you care about me?'

'Yes, I do now.' And thereupon Willie gave him another good hug, accompanying it with half-a-dozen kisses, which provoked a further retort on the part of the assistant, who, abandoning himself to the influences of the moment, commenced tickling and blowing the boy's neck, making the room ring again with his laughter and cries; until, suddenly checked by an attempt to shave him (a process most children protest against), Willie, with sundry pouts and watery eyes, rubbed his soft chin, and declared, 'That hurts.' At which stage of the proceedings Auntie interfered, and suggested that if he played any longer he would not sleep to-night, and then there would be 'no getting him up in the morning.' So, after another hearty kiss, he slid off the assistant's knee, and, giving Auntie her kiss and cuddle,—a good one, as he called it,—jumped into his miniature bed, and, with that celerity indigenous to childhood, soon fell into a sound sleep.

The stillness that ensued, interrupted only by Willie's breathings and Auntie's quiet movements, as she folded up the boy's clothes and replaced them by others for the Sunday, gradually brought back the assistant's thoughts to the painful event that had devolved upon him to make known to Auntie. How unlike himself had he become! In any other such case it would

scarcely have cost him a moment's hesitancy ; but to-day he had learned to sorrow,—had learned what the most hardened must learn at one time or other, as well as the most tender, whether it be the excruciation occasioned by the immolation of an *only* love in the Tophet to which his recklessness has caused him to descend, or the chastened experience incident to a holier life. 'There is no discharge in that war.' Case our hearts in adamant if we will, the adamant will fret, and the sorrow eat through as a canker.

The room in which this scene had taken place, though evidencing that the occupant was poor, was so neatly arranged, and wore such a cosy air, that it compared very favourably with others of like or even better means. There were innocent devices to dress even poverty in more seemly garb. The small, chintz-covered arm-chair,—rather unique of its kind, it must be admitted,—that stood so invitingly on the opposite side, no one would have imagined was only an empty barrel, so sawn as to construct a back rounded to the sitter's shape, with two semicircular arms, and the lid let down half-way for the seat ; nor would any have divined that the little round table under the window, covered with an oil cover almost touching the ground, was only a super-annuated small wash-tub reversed, with a stout broom-handle inserted in a hole in the centre as a pedestal or leg, the lower end let into a heavy block of wood, to maintain its tottering perpendicular, and which, notwithstanding, was tottering still ; and that the many other little contrivances were not exactly what they seemed, but had been improvised by a cheery, happy woman, who, loving home so well herself, aimed at rendering it as attractive as her inventive genius could make it, by metamorphosing its homely contents into what they were not. It is doubtful if one hour's surrender of the room to a romping child or two would not, like some fairy wand, have dissipated the illusion ; but no *such* children were found there, either to disturb the table's gravity by mounting on the top, or to lift up the chintz cover, and, by pulling out the barrel-head seat to discover what was underneath, cause the chair to collapse by the falling in of the barrel staves ; but had there been, no one would more readily have hastened to quiet their fears with a reassuring 'Never mind, it couldn't be helped,' or laughed with the astounded little elf 'at the mischief he had wrought,' than Aunty, or Miss Austen, as she was designated. Like a good soul as she was, she never forgot that she was a child once ; though it caused Willie some

puzzling at first to comprehend how that could be, which was gradually cleared up, as, seated in the novel arm-chair, and sewing mechanically at the vests for the tailor in Cranbourne Alley, Miss Austen recounted to the interested boy on the floor at her feet, the incidents of a happy childhood, which, until now, was almost his only acquaintance with the outside world, if we except his Sunday morning experiences in the Sabbath school, in which Auntie was a teacher.

From the account thus given of herself, in detached relations, to Willie, it appeared that she and a brother were born of opulent parents, who in their palmiest days never omitted to impress on their children's mind a due sense of their obligations to Him whose bounty had bestowed on them more than on multitudes around, and to direct their hearts in gratefulness to the donor of all good; deeply sensible that, without this recognition of His grace and love, though the cup might run over with blessings, their highest draught of pleasure would want the one sweetening ingredient, that would prevent the improper commingling of sinful pleasures to render it palatable to the depraved taste. Best defence, in this mutable world, against the bitterness of adverse things, should they ever come, as to how many they do,—when the music and the song are hushed, and the fragrance of the past alone remains. But not alone to such,—not alone to soften the asperities of the hour to those who live thus. And they did come to this family, and parents and children were brought down to struggle afresh with the world; and bravely had they done so, animated and cheered by the same sustaining Providence who had never left them, but whilst passing through flood and burning was with them, until, one after the other laid in the grave, father, mother, and son were present with the Lord.

Miss Fanny Austen had in their early reverse engaged as a governess, for which nature and education had qualified her, but, like many another, had learned, whilst in such occupation, that the veriest menial is often to be envied in her position to one who, whilst required to preserve the manners and possess the accomplishments of a lady, is expected to minister with the perfection of an angel to the ill-tempered, if not worse, children, whose whims and abuse she must study and endure without murmur or complaint, accepting submissively the implication that the rough rude girls are not the ladies her example, unimpeded, would have made them. Subsequently she had taught a small school, but, not yielding a sufficiency to pay the extra accom-

modation required, this she had again resigned, to follow the more solitary and hard life of a vest maker. But throughout her course Miss Austen continued to give the same evidence of Christian resignation and cheerfulness, and her countenance wore the same beautiful expression of kindness and saintliness, although shaded by the touch of sorrow and privation. Her voice was gentle, never loud. Still refined in manners,—not now to her advantage, otherwise than in rendering her a fitting angel to minister to the class to whose rude acquaintance the stern hand of Fate had remitted her,—no reproach nor complaint of the dealings of Providence escaped her lips.

It was just as she entered on this last mode of earning her livelihood, that Mr. Grumphy became acquainted with her, and proposed that she should undertake the charge of Willie, who, thus fortuitously and happily situated, had now resided upwards of six years with this foster-mother.

Miss Austen had accepted her charge with a full recognition of its responsibility, and a reliance on aid that she knew would not be withheld, and as the result a guileless child rewarded her unwearied care. Now and again—a solitary exception to the everyday thoughtlessness, or rather perverseness, or more correctly still, naturally budding and maturing wickedness that the infallible word declares to be bound up in the heart of a child—there does appear a typical Samuel or an Obadiah to alleviate the sad evidence to be found in every household of the universality of this truth,—a rare phenomenon, from his birth unlike other children, so mild, so gentle, so strangely precocious, he is pronounced too good to live, and so he dies and leaves a fragrant memory of his unearthly life. But Miss Austen's engrossing idea was to rear a child good enough to *live*, and a true representative of those of whom her Saviour declared the kingdom of heaven to be composed. As one evidence of her success, the influence this boy had acquired over the otherwise impassive assistant was significant: the harshness and doggedness of his nature succumbed to the beauty and loveliness of the ingenuous child,—we mean the innate qualities. But Nature had not been niggard in her external impress or mould of Willie's person and features: fair, light-haired, of almost flaxen shade and silken gloss, high forehead, light blue eyes, finely-formed nose and mouth, and features expressive, especially when lit up by any special cause, and, though not yet sufficiently developed, a figure of patrician stamp, and, as time evolved the plant, a natural gracefulness was

superadded. Such was Miss Austen, and such her precious ward.

Willie had been asleep some time ; and although Miss Austen, who had completed her preparations for the Sunday morning, and was now seated at the table examining a pair of socks, had made two or three efforts to draw Mr. Grumphy into conversation, she had only succeeded in eliciting an occasional grunt ; but as this was not unusual, it did not otherwise cause any surprise, save that she fancied he appeared more uneasy than ordinary.

‘Miss Austen,’ at length said the assistant, fixing his eyes on the cot, ‘I’ve bad news.’

Aunt dropped the socks in her lap, and, following the direction of Mr. Grumphy’s steadfast gaze, her eyes rested also on the little cot for an instant, but, quickly regaining her composure, she took up one of the socks and commenced darning a small hole in the toe thereof, and was silent. Experience had taught her that the best—indeed, the only—way to get satisfactorily at any information the assistant had to impart, was to leave him to himself, as he invariably resented any attempt at questioning ; and so, without giving other intimation of having heard his remark, she continued her work, though not without a slight perturbation.

‘Yes, I’ve bad news.’ He rose and walked across the room to the cot, looked a few seconds at the sleeping child, and returned to his seat ; leaning his elbows on his knees, bowed his head between his hands as they grasped his ears. Miss Austen raised her eyes from her work, and looked at him with increased anxiety. After a further suspense, he raised himself from his bent posture, and his eyes met the searching gaze of Miss Austen ; then, dropping them, he looked over to the cot, and said, ‘We’re going to lose Willie.’ His voice faltered a little, and he tried to conceal its tremulousness in an effort to clear his throat.

‘Lose Willie !’ exclaimed Miss Austen, thrown off her usual guard at this unexpected announcement ; and she rose and went over to the cot to look at the boy, in doubt whether Mr. Grumphy had observed any symptom of illness that his calling made him more familiar with than herself, but could perceive no indication other than that of a sound, healthy, blooming child, and turned towards the assistant to await his explanation.

‘Dr. Scarr thinks it’s time he went to school.’

‘Oh, well, Mr. Grumphy, perhaps it is,’ said the lady, somewhat relieved and yet affected by the intelligence, and wisely en-

deavouring to conceal her own feelings, that she might not aggravate those of the assistant, whose regard for the boy she had such continued evidence of. That such a separation would sooner or later occur, she was satisfied, and had, although with only partial success, endeavoured to prepare herself for. 'I was afraid it was worse.'

'Worse! it couldn't be worse,' said the assistant with emphasis.

'We will often see him.'

'We'll never see him,' and Mr. Grumphy walked over to the cot once more and looked at the child, and then crossed to the mantelpiece, on which he leaned his arm, whilst his eyes still rested on the little bed.

'Why, where's he to go?' said Miss Austen, permitting her feelings to get the better of her discretion, and which of course deferred for a time the required announcement.

A silence ensued; then, walking to the window, he stooped down and sniffed at the sweet-william growing in the flower-pot, which he purchased at Covent Garden and presented to Aunt, because he thought it emblematic of Petty. Turning suddenly round, he addressed her in a harsher tone,—'Well, Miss Austen, that ain't your child, and it isn't mine. What matters to us where it goes? There's hundreds of children in the world' (Mr. Grumphy was moderate in his estimate),—'hundreds too many. Why should we'—care he was about saying, but just then a prolonged sound, half a moan and half a sigh, such as children at times utter or breathe in their sleep, escaped from Willie. Mr. Grumphy's assumption of indifference was abortive, and he stepped hastily over to the cot and stood looking into the up-turned face until he could not see it any longer, as slowly and silently tear after tear coursed down that indented face, welling up from a heart the sluices whereof had been kept firmly barred and bolted until now, impregnable hitherto to any effort to move it thus.

It was but a momentary weakness. His riven heart was closed again, and, vexed that he had yielded thereto, he turned abruptly towards Miss Austen to address her, when he discovered her form bowed on her chair, her face buried in her handkerchief. He seized his hat, hurried to the door, opened it, went out and pulled it to; then reopened it, and, hesitating a few seconds, in a subdued and unusually kind tone and in broken words said, 'Aunt—tell—Willie—to-morrow,—I can't,' and closed the door. In another minute he reopened it, and added, with some difficulty

and strong emotion, partly owing to his effort to control himself, 'Don't break his little heart.'

Poor Grumphy, as the convulsive effort to subdue the emotion, now almost overpowering him, caused these words to fall in so pitiable a manner on Aunt's ear, she forgot her own sorrow, and would fain have used her efforts to soothe him, whose heart seemed the most likely to break.

'He's going on Monday at six in the morning,' added he after a pause, and then closed the door so gently, that Miss Austen thought he was still inside. Once more the door opened, though only a few inches. 'Have all his clothes packed, and I'll come in for him.' He closed the door, and his receding footsteps, as he descended the stairs, told that he had retired to his own room, doubtless to pass one of the saddest nights he had known.

Left to herself, Miss Austen began to consider the announcement so incoherently made. Not less attached than Mr. Grumphy to the boy, around whom so much of mystery hung, and which occasioned her many an hour of earnest solicitude for his future, she had in some measure prepared and fortified herself against the trying ordeal that she had schooled herself into expecting, quite sensible that there could be no appeal against what in itself could not be considered improper, and which the authority that placed him in her charge had the power at any time to pursue. True, she had hoped and tried to persuade herself it would have been deferred until he was a year or two older; but as this was altogether uncertain, she had in the meantime taken advantage of every hour to give such a bias, both intellectually and morally, to the head and the heart of the lad, as, although so youthful, she hoped and prayed would hereafter bear fruit, and of which even thus early the incipient promise had gratified and repaid her sedulous care.

Approaching the bed, she thoughtfully seated herself by its side. Rapidly the past rose before her, from the day when, a mere infant, she first assumed the responsible task; and thence onward, recalled some developing trait, that, watered from on high, she trusted would go on to perfection. In view of the coming painful separation, wrapped as the future was in impenetrable darkness, and distressing as might be her anticipation, she felt no regret that it had fallen to her lot to guide the child's tenderest years, nor to save the rending of her own heart would she have wished it otherwise. She desired to live to purpose; and a sense of gratefulness and even gladness sprang up in her soul as she

reviewed the short period of her guardianship, and recognised that not chance but Providence had so ordered that hers should be the task to guide. She knew how otherwise it might have been, with one whose natural protectors had so unaccountably, as it seemed to her, committed it, at the most endearing and helpless period of its life, to the care of strangers, whose oversight might have been confined to that of the physical alone, and even that probably measured by the extent of remuneration, which, judging from the parsimony exhibited in the allowance to herself, would have been small. Although in this respect Mr. Grumphy, whose close observance of the surgeon's proceedings had enabled him to learn much more than he was aware, could have informed her that but a small proportion of the allowance received was applied by that worthy to its object; but this the assistant never divulged. Of one thing, however, she became satisfied from her own observations, that there was an interest taken in the boy by an unknown person, and that interest was not slight; and this encouraged her to hope that brighter days were in store for him, and that, with talents in advance of those of the generality of children, he would, under the contemplated educational course, expand from boyhood into riper years to adorn the circle in which, she fondly persuaded herself, he would yet be called to move by those whom at present some fatality restrained from acknowledging, but who would eventually be proud to claim their beautiful and patrician boy.

With these thoughts Miss Austen gathered up his clothes, and arranged the room with the tidiness natural to her, and then, securing the door, bowed down by the side of his bed. In fervent pleadings she commended him to his truest Friend, and besought Him to set His seal on that soft heart, and shield him from all that, in the new sphere on which he was about to enter, might taint, or corrupt, or destroy the principle of right; and that, without the bitter smart of experience, he might be guarded against its falsehood, deceit, and vice. As she rose from her knees, she imprinted a kiss that caused a momentary smile to play over the features of the unconscious lad, and, arranging her own humble bed, retired, grateful that she had one to retire to.

CHAPTER V.

A CHILDISH CHAPTER—TWO BIRDIES.

WITH a perversity occasionally witnessed in the conduct of men moved by strong impulse to actions unusual to them, Mr. Grumphy, although much later than on other days, rose on the Sunday morning as though nothing had transpired to interrupt his ordinary life. Having speedily disposed of his toilet and attended to the tailless blackbird,—a specimen that, on account of this deficiency in its vertebral continuation, he had purchased at the bird shop at a trifle less than its original price,—he wended his way to the coffee-house in the adjoining alley, May's Buildings, where he usually breakfasted. The Sunday paper being in requisition by earlier arrivals, Mr. Grumphy was content to run his eye down the columns of the previous day's *Morning Advertiser*, in the police reports of which he was soon so engrossed, as to become oblivious to all else except the disposal of his coffee, during the interruption occasioned whereby he merely laid down the paper to partake thereof, and bestow an exhilarating flap with one hand prior to resuming the next interesting case. In fact, Mr. Grumphy was evidently 'himself again,' and enjoying his restoration to his normal state, the felicity whereof was just about being added to by the next box handing the morning's paper, when the waiter informed him that a gentleman at the door wished to see him.

'Then he won't. I'll take my breakfast, and I'd like to see who'll prevent me. If the king'— But before he could state the bearing that illustrious personage's interference might have upon the conclusion of his meal, Dr. Scarr stood before him, and intimated his wish to see him in private. As such authority was, in his case, equal, if not superior, to any sovereign's, the surly man rose, though with some doggedness, and followed the surgeon outside,—a state of things that appeared to afford great

enjoyment to a small customer in the opposite stall, as testified by his side-play and giggles thereat in concert with the waiter, the latter of whom, having experienced occasional bluff treatment on the part of the assistant, was not grieved to have an opportunity of seeing him brought down a peg.

‘Mr. Grumphy,’ said the surgeon on gaining the outside, ‘I was at your room, which I found locked, and had some difficulty in finding you, which would be very inconvenient in case you were required on an emergency.’ And without awaiting any vindication on the part of the assistant, he continued,—‘This evening, about eight, I want you to bring that child to the surgery; leave him there for about a quarter of an hour, and then return and take him back.’

Having delivered these orders, he turned on his heel and went down the court, leaving Mr. Grumphy to return and finish his breakfast, but which the waiter, according to the custom of all such functionaries, during his temporary absence had taken precautionary means to prevent, by speedily removing the fragments thereof. Taking a cursory view of the situation, and concluding his wisest course was to acquiesce therein, he strayed into St. Martin’s Lane, and, after a short deliberation with himself, started off over Westminster Bridge *en route* to Greenwich Park, to spend the day there, with the intention of dining in its neighbourhood, returning in time to execute the surgeon’s commission.

Whilst Mr. Grumphy is thus spending his Sunday, the particulars of which it is not of any import to narrate, it may be as well to glance at a few particulars bearing on the history of the surgeon, needful in order to a due appreciation of the character and position of that eminent practitioner. In early life he had succeeded to the practice of an old retired surgeon in a country town, with prospects sufficiently encouraging to any medical aspirant; but a naturally morose disposition, that a less hopeful beginning might have had some effect in controlling, and on selfish considerations prevented the grosser features thereof from exhibiting themselves on professional occasions, was at times so offensively displayed towards his patients, that, on one or two other medical men coming to reside in the neighbourhood, though scarcely his equals in chirurgery or therapeutic skill, his practice so diminished that he was rarely called in except on consultations. As Dr. Scarr attributed this preference to every cause but the right one, he showed no inclination to alter his

bearing, but rather yielded himself more fully to its dominancy, omitting no opportunity of its display in resenting what he deemed an unjust preference and interference with his acquired rights.

By way of solace to his jealous and wounded self-esteem, as his practice declined he sought amelioration in dissipation, and thereby accelerated his ruin. To extricate himself from his accumulating difficulties, he married a woman of means, but of vulgar mind and domineering disposition, who, finding her property squandered by his reckless conduct, and her expectations of position in the town as the doctor's lady defeated, had surrendered herself to her uncontrollable temper, and rendered his home a woman's purgatory. In course of time his circumstances became desperate, and he was compelled to leave the place, and, after essaying in vain to gain a livelihood in a distant town, he finally removed to London, where he gradually worked himself into a phase of professional life eschewed by practitioners of character and culture, and left, as in other professions and trades, to those parasites who eke out a subsistence by fastening on the unhappy class whose errors, misfortune, or viciousness, or, it may be, the specious villany of others, have betrayed into wrong-doing. To such men occasional tempting opportunities offer of lucrative employment, and for unblushing extortion for their clandestine assistance. And yet, but for such agency, how many might perish from fear of exposure or other deterrent cause; whilst, on the other hand, how many may be more speedily hurried to their end by such instrumentality. But whilst expending our virtuous indignation against men of this stamp, we must not lose sight of the painful fact that they are only the symptomatic indication of a morbid—chronically morbid—state of a part of the body-social, evidencing the character of the disease lurking in or near their locality,—summoned to meet a demand *they* did not create, but the rather, which existing, called *them* into being. Is it objected that to reason thus is to apologise for an evil? 'Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good.' It is true, an evil cannot condone an evil; but its development has this use,—the tree is known by its fruit. Wherefore these exponents, as they crop out, become the metres whereby may be gauged the higher or lower morality of the community in which they more or less abound, and thereby invite the salutary action of the more virtuous portion of the commonwealth. The hoar-frost lingers in the shade, the fungus

exudes from the diseased trunk or limb, and the presence of the excrescence indicates its unhealthy origin.

In reference to the surgeon, however, it should be stated that he had managed to secure, in combination with a practice partaking of the foregoing character, an amount of respectability that obtained him the *entrée* to a better class of patients in a few isolated cases.

But to return to the proceedings of this Sabbath-day. Very different from that pursued by their fellow-lodger had been the conduct of Miss Austen and Willie. Early up, they had partaken of their simple meal with thankfulness, though with less enjoyment than usual; for Aunty was pondering with a heavy heart the change that was about to take place, and which, from its precipitancy, had left no time for preparation, and the restless eye of Willie detected more than once the unusual shade on her countenance, and which her native openness would not allow her to hide. His ready intuition told him there was something wrong, and, notwithstanding Aunty's nice Sunday morning toast and egg, Willie, like herself, found his appetite gone.

Miss Austen turned her chair round in order to avoid the notice of the boy, and placed her feet on the fender, her eyes, meantime, vacantly fixed on the dying embers of the fire, which the few rays of the rising sun that could enter through the small windows were aiding in extinguishing. It might be that they suggested to her heavy heart that, although the hope that had never been more than faintly cherished of her continued guardianship was now being quite extinguished, perchance it too was only being accomplished by the potency of a brighter and more celestial beam. Be this as it may, she had not sat musing thus for more than a few minutes, when Willie slid down from his chair and noiselessly moved round to her side, took her hands in his, and, looking up in her face, said in a whisper, 'Aunty, what's the matter? Are you ill?'

'No, dear,' said Miss Austen, aroused to a consciousness of his having remarked her sorrow and its effect on himself, and that it was incumbent on her to enact a more self-denying part, however difficult such might be. 'I was thinking'—

'And what were you thinking of, Aunt? Don't think; it makes you look so—so sad.'

'But we can't always look merry, you know; you don't when you fall.'

‘Because that hurts.’ Then, looking into her face, ‘Are you hurt, Auntie?’

‘There are other things than falls that hurt.’

‘O yes, I know that. Why, when I was trying to cut the loaf that day, and the knife slipped and cut my hand, and it bled so, that hurt.’

‘Yes; but we can be pained without being bruised or wounded. There are things that make the heart sad.’

She drew her hand gently down his soft flaxen hair. Willie was silent, wondering what that could be, and which he thought must just be what had so affected Aunt Fanny.

Looking smilingly into his upturned face, she said, ‘Willie, wouldn’t you like to go to school?’ in a tone so encouraging, that it seemed to take for granted that of course he would.

‘And you not to teach me any more? I’d rather have you to teach me; but I know you haven’t time.’

‘Nor can I teach what you should be now learning. You’ll soon be a big boy, Willie, when you will have to take your place in the world like other big boys.’

‘Like Eddy Jones, who’s left off school, and works now?’

‘It’s time now that you should be learning hard.’

It’s almost a question if Auntie’s opinion coincided with her words, as she looked thoughtfully at the tender child.

‘Yes; and I’ll go to school in Tavistock Street, where he did.’

‘Would it not be better to go to a boarding-school?’

‘What’s that?’

‘Where boys go to live away from home for a short time, that they may attend altogether to their learning.’

‘And never come home every day?’

‘Well, it’s thought they can get on better at their books if they remain at school a short time without coming home.’

‘Short time? What’s a short time? And am I to go to one?’—a light breaking in that caused him to comprehend the tendency of Miss Austen’s remarks.

‘I believe Dr. Scarr wishes it.’

‘And then I shan’t see you every day for a long—long time?’

His eyes filled with tears, and, putting his arms around Auntie’s waist, he buried his face in her bosom, as he added, ‘Then I don’t want to go.’

For a moment that loving heart beat in unison, and she pressed him to her breast; then conscious, however painful, her own feelings must be controlled, she stooped her head, kissed

his wet cheeks, and assumed a cheerful tone and manner, and began to tell of a boy who had gone thus from home, and, after remaining some time, had returned so clever, that on entering on the world's arena he had become an ornament and a blessing to society; and so interested the boy, that before she had concluded the relation, he had caught the enthusiasm it had been her wish to inspire, and felt a glowing spirit of emulation.

'Is that all about it, Aunt Fanny?' said Willie, climbing into her lap. 'Tell it again.'

Having thus prepared the way, she now, in the same inspiring tone and words, and with much tact, gradually acquainted him with his own proposed departure for school, more than once making him laugh heartily as she dwelt on the scenes and hilarity of schoolboy days, and concluded by giving him to understand that such was the life she hoped he was about to realize.

An existence altogether different from the little world in which he had hitherto moved, had burst upon his conception, and little else occupied his thoughts throughout the day, either at church or the Sabbath school, whither, as was her wont, his scrupulous guardian did not fail on this last opportunity, as she deemed it, to lead him.

As the day wore on, a more than usual quiet pervaded the hitherto happy home. Miss Austen seated herself at the window with the Bible open before her, and pondered the words whose import was hidden in her heart. The precious truths were as a balm to her wounded soul, and she derived her consolations from them. They had ever stood her in her need, and would not fail her in her coming trial; for though her language was, 'My soul melteth for heaviness,' she had learned from the same word that 'He is a very present help in time of trouble.'

Absorbed in the reading of those truths in which so confidently she rested, Willie had been left to his own reflections, which gradually turned into another channel, led on by his interest in a Sunday school book, wherein the virtues of a good old widow, that reminded him strongly of Aunt Fanny, had been the prominent feature, in her paternal solicitude for a little orphan grandson under her charge. The designation 'widow' had somewhat puzzled him, and once or twice he had looked off his book with the intention of obtaining an explanation from Miss Austen, but, observing her so intent on her reading, he hesitated at interrupting her.

It was during one of these brief pauses that the door was

quietly opened, and a young girl, a little older than himself, put her head in. From the smiles interchanged between herself and the boy, they were evidently old friends, and the latter beckoned her to enter. Closing the door as quietly as she had opened it, she stepped softly across the room, and, looking over his shoulder, asked him in an undertone what he was reading. It should be premised the girl's name was Mary Jones,—a bright, merry little lass, who lodged, with the family of which she was a member, on the same story. Besides the Eddy Jones referred to by Willie, and who was a much older brother, and employed at his trade, she was the only other young person in the house, and, as a consequence, was frequently found in Miss Austen's rooms, much to her own advantage, and the mutual delight of herself and Willie.

'Oh, such a beautiful book ! it's so like Aunty. But what's a widow, Mary ?'

'A widow ! why, don't you know ?—a woman that's lost her husband, to be sure.' And Mary eyed him with a look that seemed to say she knew a thing or two.

'Lost her husband !' said Willie slowly, endeavouring to take in the meaning. 'How did she lose him ?'

'How ! Why, he's dead, to be sure : ain't that losing him ?'

'Is it ? What did he die for ?' But, seeing a smile on Mary's face, he shook his head, and said, 'No, I don't mean that : I mean, how did he die ?' Willie's mind was evidently running on the particular case that led to the inquiry.

'Oh, you goose ! how do I know what people's husbands die of ?' said Mary in a louder key, which attracted Miss Austen's attention, who looked up, and, recognising Mary, smilingly remarked,—

'Ah, is that you, Mary ?' which the latter, having acknowledged by a smile in return, Miss Austen resumed her reading.

'Is Aunt a widow ?' whispered Willie.

'Aunt a widow !—what a question !'

'Well, I—I didn't know ; but then she hasn't one.'

'One what ?'

'Why, what you said.'

'Husband ?'

'Yes, husband.'

'Why, of course not ; she's a'— Mary hesitated, and turned her eyes towards Miss Austen, but perceiving that that lady had not been disturbed by their conversation, but was still engrossed

in her book, she lowered her voice, and in a half whisper, but with emphasis, putting her mouth to his ear, said, 'She's—an—old—maid,' and thereupon stepped backward, and was about to enjoy the funny announcement, but, recollecting herself in time, clapped her hands over her mouth, and by her expanded cheeks and laughing eyes gave signs that she was having it out interiorly.

Willie looked puzzled, and, taking no notice of the young lady's merriment, repeated to himself, 'An old maid—old maid.' As this had been told in a whisper, and, from appearances, was evidently not a title of honour in his informant's opinion, he presumed it must imply something, if not very wrong, yet not quite as it should be, and, roused at the idea of any aspersion being cast on his best friend, he exclaimed indignantly, 'Maid! she ain't a maid.'

'Oh, Willie! oh!'

'Yes, now. Kate, that lives with Mrs. Brown over the way, is her maid, 'cause I heard her say she was; and Aunt ain't nobody's maid.'

Mary shrugged her shoulders, looked very knowing, and, placing her hands once more over her mouth, gave tokens that she was repeating the fun, but which, exciting the boy's indignation to a higher pitch, he reiterated in a louder tone, 'Aunt ain't an old maid; she's a good aunt.'

'She's an old maid, for all that,' replied Mary in an equally loud key, not going to be put down, her laughing countenance subsiding into a more serious aspect, whilst she gave sundry nods and shakes of the head, intended for positive affirmations of her questioned assertion.

'Well, what is an old maid, then?' said Willie, again lowering his tone, as Auntie, interrupted by the little argument, had requested them not to disagree.

'A woman that hasn't a husband,' said Mary very firmly.

'There, now I have ye—I have ye!' slapping his book on the arm of the chair. 'Didn't you say a minute ago that was a widow?'

'Ah, get along! An old maid never had one, but a widow had.'

'Why hadn't she?'

''Cos she hadn't.'

Willie thought a moment, and then said, 'Did Aunt want one?'

At this inquiry, made with much seriousness, Mary had nearly lost her balance once more, but, recovering herself, looked across the room to ascertain if Miss Austen was still engaged with her

book, and then approached the boy, who drew back in a resentful manner and requested her to give over her nonsense, and, seizing him by the shoulder, made great efforts to whisper in his ear, but over which he covered his hand to prevent her design, and in default of which she exclaimed more loudly, 'She couldn't get one;' and then went off into a suppressed giggle.

Willie regarded her with a gathering frown, and, indignant that such an impossibility should be ascribed to Miss Austen, who, in his estimation, could get whatever she liked, turned round, and, before Mary had time to stop him, exclaimed, 'Aunt!'

'Well, my dear,' said Miss Austen, looking up from her reading.

'Are you'—

In a state of consternation, the colour mounting to her eyes, Mary rushed towards Willie, and, seizing him with one arm by the neck, with the other hand she covered his mouth. Willie, however, struggled, and in incoherent snatches endeavoured to ask the desired information, whilst Mary, in deprecatory tones, expostulated against the betrayal.

'Oh now, Willie!—I never—I'll not speak to you again if you do.'

'Let him alone, Mary,' interposed Miss Austen, now attracted by the contention; 'let him speak, like a good girl. What's the matter?'

'Now, Aunt, are you'—as Willie looked into the pleading face of his alarmed friend, he hesitated; but, fearful something amiss had been said or done that it was her duty to know and check, Miss Austen insisted on the boy's being allowed to speak. By this time, however, he was becoming confused, and he stammered,—

'Are you, are you—I forget—what is it?' turning towards Mary.

'Well,' said Aunt, 'go on.'

'Mary says'—

'No, O no, now, Willie!' interrupted the lass. 'You asked, you know. I won't love you now if you do;' and she began picking her lips and pouting.

'Let him speak, Mary. What's the matter, Willie?'

Trained to obey, and too late regretting his impetuosity, he looked at Mary and then at his Aunt, and in a hesitating voice and with abashed look said, 'Are you a widow?'

Aunty and Mary united in a hearty laugh, in which Willie joined, unable to resist, though conscious that he had made some blunder.

As soon as the laughter had subsided, Willie said to Mary in a side voice, 'You needn't to laugh, 'cos I know what you said.'

'Well, what was it?'

'Well, I don't remember now, but I will.'

By this time Aunty's attention was required to the necessary preparation for the evening meal, and so, calling them 'two silly little things,' she proceeded to fill the kettle and spread the cloth for tea. The workings of the two children's faces showed they were neither of them satisfied with the result, and, whilst Mary was pouting at the little table, Willie was diving down into his pockets with both hands for something that was not there. Suddenly he got it, as he brought both hands quickly out of his pockets, and clapped them aloud, though without attracting Aunty's notice. Mary looked up, as he went over to her and whispered, 'I know now—an old servant maid. You needn't to laugh now,' for Mary was cramming the bosom of her pinafore into her mouth to prevent any such strong propensity.

'Hush,' said Mary, as the boy went on repeating it.

'I won't tell,' said he. But a new thought occurred, whereby it might be possible to confute his opponent's premises. 'Mary, do—do maids have children?'

'Children, no, of course.'

'There now, then; Aunt ain't an old—what is it?—maid, because she's got children. Hasn't she got me?—There now.'

Before Mary had time to entertain this counter-argument, and reply thereto, Miss Austen, addressing Mary, asked if Willie had told her he was going to leave them. It was now Mary's turn to be puzzled, and, looking from Aunty to her little friend, who commenced smiling, she concluded it was some by-play, by which Willie was to repay her for placing him in the recent dilemma, so she laughed, and jumped up and down, as she leaned her hands on the back of the chair, and said,—

'Leave me! I'd like to see him leave me, if he dare.'

'Yes, Mary. Now you needn't make fun. It's true,—isn't it, Aunt?'

'Yes,' responded Miss Austen, 'quite true.' Whereat Mary's smile subsided, as did her jumping, and, looking from one to the other, she awaited further explanation, which was not long in being fully given. At the conclusion she withdrew to the

window, and there silently employed herself in wetting the point of her forefinger and tracing the name of Willie on a pane of glass, at the same time working out in her own way the problem just stated; and which, though solved in no very abstract mode, or by any mathematical formula, was nevertheless resolving itself into very probable issues, to her unsophisticated mind, that seemed to imply loneliness and a vacuum that she had never dreamt of before. No wonder that from those two full brown eyes large drops were falling on to the window-sill.

'Won't that be good?' said Willie, as he came over to her side and took the unemployed hand in his, and tried, though unsuccessfully, to peer into her averted face, turned away to conceal her tears, but detecting which, in an altered tone he exclaimed, 'Why, what's the matter, Mary? Aunt, Mary's crying!'

'No! now Willie,' said the little maid, still keeping her face to the window, 'what makes you say that?'

But Aunt understood it all, and, without appearing to notice this ebullition, in which she participated, was not long in dissipating the *present* grief; and soon the light-hearted girl entered into the speculations of her young friend, and, as each portrayed his or her own ideal of the future, the little vessel in which they embarked floated on the glassy bosom of a tranquil lake under a cloudless sky, until, gliding into a magic haven, they arrived at an Elysium of light, and love, and joy. Again and again did they picture the voyage, with variations of incident, but ever the same unruffled course. No shadow obscured their sky; no huge wave threatened their fairy skiff; no black night settled over their visionary voyage; no bleak shore on which their bark could be wrecked. And so, feeble and fainter grew the thought of a pang at parting.

Willie recounted to his friend the wonderful story that Aunt had told him in the morning, the recital of which delighted her, as it had done himself, and transformed Willie into a hero. And then Mary remembered that a long time ago Eddy went away too—'oh! for such a long while, and so far—oh, so far!—she thought it was Greenwich or Gravesend, she didn't remember which, but knew it began with a G, but wasn't quite sure, and at last at the end of three whole days and nights came home again.

'With a fortune, and a big man?' said Willie, his eyes glistening again.

'No, she didn't think that, but that was because'—but she could not remember the 'because,' though she knew there was one.

Thus nearly is sorrow allied to joy. 'The agonies which are, have their origin in the ecstasies which might have been.'

The evening was closing in when Mr. Grumphy returned from Greenwich. He had walked there and back, strolled through the Park, dined and tea'd at the same time in one of the numerous small houses of entertainment in the neighbourhood of the lower gates, and spent the day alone, and without taking any apparent interest in the people who thronged that Cockney resort, or the incidents or scenes inviting his attention. He walked leisurely up the stairs to his own room, and was about to throw himself on his bed, feeling fatigued, when he recollected, and, ascending the next flight, knocked at Miss Austen's door, and informed her that Willie must be ready to accompany him to the surgeon's at a little before eight. The good lady was about to remonstrate at the lateness of the hour for a child, and to suggest his going at once, but he abruptly shut the door and returned to his room, to carry out his original intention of resting his tired limbs on his couch, where he lay half dozing, until warned by the quarter chimes of St. Martin that the hour was drawing nigh when he was to make his appearance with the child at the surgeon's. As he reached the landing, the door opened, and Miss Austen appeared with Willie ready to accompany him.

'I'll be back with him shortly,' said the taciturn man, as he took Willie's hand and descended to the street, without bestowing a word or look of recognition on the boy, the result of his day's deliberations, and by which he concluded to be able to maintain a frigid indifference towards him, and avoid being again moved by his artless ways. Perhaps he might have partially succeeded, if not entirely, had he worn a glove.

What trifles sometimes upset the best intentions, the wisest plans. But Mr. Grumphy did *not* wear gloves,—he never wore them; he had an odd one in one of his pockets to carry in his hand on state occasions, but he never wore it, especially as he had lost the fellow glove; and so, most unpremeditatedly and thoughtlessly, he took Willie's little hand within his own. Mr. Grumphy, despite his day's drill, was still flesh and blood, and, to use the significant language of an American naval cousin, 'blood is thicker than water,' and so the touch of that soft, tiny, bare palm, ere he had time to close the floodgates, had he had them at his command, sent the warm pulsations with fever-heat and speed to his poor seared heart, subdued the old Adam that was victoriously usurping Willie's place, and, toppling him

over, reseated the boy in the old spot. In another instant Willie was in his arms, and the mutual hugging and kissing going on, and which did not cease until he had nearly reached the church, when, setting him down, he took his hand again, and hurried through the court into the Strand.

Unaccustomed to being out so late, Willie's attention was too much attracted by the altered appearance of things by night, to interrupt the course of Mr. Grumphy's feelings by his usual chatter; and so they hastened on without exchanging a word until they had passed the Exeter Change, that ancient covered thoroughfare through which the children and nurses of a generation now no more, loitered, in wondering admiration at the display of the innumerable articles of juvenile attraction, as well as of trinkets and gew-gaws for riper years, and resolved, as they had done on every previous occasion of passing through, to save their money and purchase the whole stock; until, arriving at the eastern end, their attention was called off by the roars and screeches that reminded them of the menagerie above the arcade, and which as speedily changed their resolve into applying the aforesaid savings to obtain a sight of 'the most unprecedented exhibition of tigers, lions, and other wild beasts, including an elephant,' that a man, who stood at the foot of the stairs, habited in crimson and gold, declared was to be seen in the whole world! at the same time informing them that children were half-price, as the hand-bill thrust into their hands would explain.

Arrived at the corner of Catherine Street, to which, urged by the inward struggle, Mr. Grumphy had almost dragged the boy, he halted, and, discovering his heated, breathless state, stooped down and wiped the perspiration from his face; having done which, he pointed to the shop, a little higher up on the other side, and said,—

'We are going in there, Willie—to see the Doctor. I'll just leave you with him.'

'For ever!' exclaimed the alarmed boy. 'Won't you come back?' and he instinctively clung to his arm. It had very nearly upset the assistant again, but he coughed and rallied, and said as soothingly as he knew how,—

'O yes; you'll only be there a little while. I'll come for you again.'

'What's he want?'

'I don't know; but you'll be good, and not make him angry, —now mind that.'

‘O no, I won’t,—Aunty told me.’

‘That’s right. Now come on;’ and, crossing the road, they entered the shop door, the shutter of which being down intimated there was some one within to attend to Sunday customers. The errand boy, whose turn it was this Sabbath to remain in charge, informed him Dr. Scarr was inside, but as that person heard the door open and shut, he came out of the surgery, looked at his watch, and remarked that it was five minutes past the time, then reached his hand to the child, and, as he instinctively shrank back, grasped him by the arm, and led him into the room, bidding the assistant return in half-an-hour.

CHAPTER VI.

A DILEMMA.

ON the same Sunday on which the preceding occurrences took place,—a very eventful Sabbath in this story, and which, it is feared, will take one or two more chapters before its record is complete, and in which respect it is very unlike ordinary Sundays,—the surgeon had slept later than usual, having been called during the night to attend a patient at a distant part of the city. As it had curtailed his night's repose, he was making up therefor by borrowing an equivalent from the morning hours, or rather intended so to do, but which, for the following reason, he was prevented carrying out to its completion.

Mrs. Scarr, who never allowed *her* slumbers to relax on account of her husband's nocturnal irregularities, had risen at the usual time, and more than once entered the bedroom, and, as she imagined, awoke her drowsy lord; but that gentleman had on each occasion responded to her call either in his sleep, or had fallen off again into his disturbed slumber, for he had failed to make his appearance in the breakfast-room, where he was awaited.

Now Mrs. Scarr was not a woman to be trifled with, and it is due to the surgeon to say he never attempted it, at least when wide awake, preferring to exhibit, on all ordinary occasions, a show of compliance with that lady's demands, rather than by opposing risk their enforcement,—a feat experience had made him aware she was quite able to do,—for, in addition to what has been before intimated of her disposition, she was a woman of commanding physique and imperious manner; her eyes, unlike the half-closed orbs of her husband, were large and of piercing sharpness, her nose and chin very prominent, and in connection with high cheek-bones; added to a voice sonorous and masculine, were a heavy arm and hand, admirable aid to the administration

Having waited to the full limit of her patience, which did not exceed an ordinary extent, as usually occurs on the exhaustion of such element, a vacuum took place. Now it is a trite axiom that nature abhors a vacuum, and as Mrs. Scarr was nature itself, without a particle of the supernatural in her composition, it was only in accordance with such theorem that something else should immediately occupy the space occasioned by the aforesaid exhaustion, and accordingly—to descend into Mr. Scarr's laboratory for a simile—that something in its action very much resembled a combination of chlorate of potash with powdered charcoal, an explosion thereby ensuing of sufficient force, if not to blow her drowsy spouse out of his bed, at least powerful enough to cause his ejection therefrom, without affording him time to ascertain if he was asleep or awake. And it happened in this wise: unable to control the effect of the new impulse, Mrs. Scarr rushed into his room, seized the clothes, and dragged them on to the floor in so vigorous and rapid a manner, that, thus violently aroused from his heavy sleep, in the bewilderment of the moment the surgeon took it for granted the house was on fire, but, not perceiving any sign of smoke or flame, the next thought was that he had been again summoned to attend the patient of the last night, and accordingly he rushed to where he usually deposited his garments, arranged in such order as on emergencies to be able to dress in the dark, but which, now scattered about the room in every direction, necessitated some delay in collecting.

'Is the man waiting?' inquired the agitated surgeon, as he became aware of the presence of Mrs. Scarr.

'The man waiting!' responded the lady, not exactly comprehending his meaning. 'No, but the woman is; but that does not signify. O no! let her wait,' laying a studied stress on the last words, at the same time gathering the bed-clothes off the floor and throwing them on to the bed.

'Yes, yes,' said the surgeon, in his hurried search for his clothes only catching a word here and there, 'let her wait—let her wait!' concluding the messenger was a woman.

Mrs. Scarr turned round smartly and eyed him from head to foot, but, as Mr. Scarr's back was towards her, he had not the full advantage of the inspection, and then in measured tones she exclaimed,—

'Yes; now you're going to begin your sneering—you're so joky;' and, stamping her foot, she added, 'She won't wait, sir,—she's waited too long.'

'Bless me! then why didn't you call me before?' said the confused man, as the lady bounced out of the room, whilst he continued his toilet, and in his haste was thrusting his arms into the wrong sleeves of his dressing-gown, unable to find his coat and waistcoat, probably enveloped in the bed-clothes his lady had just thrown on to the bed. At length he managed to get the wrapper properly on and his feet in his slippers, when he hastened to the head of the stairs, and, without further information, shuffled down to the surgery. Finding no one there, he looked into the passage-way and then into the shop, but which, being closed, was dark. He rubbed his eyes to clear his vision for a fresh survey, but discovered nothing, and appeared posed. At length, as he re-ascended the stairs, he became sufficiently collected to form a correct idea of the whole proceeding, and thereupon returned to his room and rearranged his wig, which in his hurry he had placed hind part before. After one or two other amendments to his dress, he entered the breakfast-room, where he found his amiable lady pouring out the tea, endeavouring to appear comfortably composed.

'Oh, you're very funny this morning, Mrs. Scarr,—very funny, unusually so!' exclaimed the surgeon, evidently mortified, as he seated himself at the table and screwed up his eyelids.

'Indeed! Mr. Scarr, it's you I think that's so funny,—rushing about the house as though you'd lost your wits, and was looking for somebody else's.'

'Well, I wouldn't look for them in this room.'

'Oh, but you are clever!—what a wit!'

'Mrs. Scarr, this is Sunday morning; let us have *one* day's rest.'

'That's what I never expect on this side the grave.'

What she expected on the other side did not transpire, but she sighed and looked into her cup, and twirled the grounds around, probably with a view to read her future in reference thereto. The surgeon felt uncomfortable at this ominous proceeding, and made an earnest attempt to turn the conversation into a less irritating channel.

'I don't think I shall be home to dinner to-day, my dear.'

'I don't expect it, sir; I am too accustomed to such slights.' The surgeon had evidently been unfortunate in his selection of a subject by which to appease the injured lady. 'May I be allowed to inquire where you intend to dine?'

'I'm to dine—to dine with Hawkes,' replied the surgeon,

beginning to wish he had deferred the allusion to his intention to a later hour.

'Dine at Mr. Hawkes', and by yourself?'

The surgeon nodded assent.

'Then I'm going with you.'

'But, my dear, my dear!' remonstrated the surgeon.

'O yes, of course; here I am, stewed up in this old gloomy physicky hole, never seeing a soul from New Year's morn to Tibb's eve, and you out every day to dine.' Mrs. Scarr indulged her preference for hyperbole.

'I out every day to dine! I out'—

'Yes—you—out—every day—to dine;—is that plain? Well, if you are not, you're somewhere, and I'm shut up; can't go anywhere because I've nothing to go in; and can't invite any one because you can't afford it, forsooth! Can't afford it? Then, sir, I'd like to know where all the money's gone that you got with me?' Mrs. Scarr had proposed this question on previous occasions, but had never, thus far, obtained a satisfactory answer.—'Ah me! I little thought when I refused poor Eppy, which nearly killed him, how I should live to repent it!'

'It's well you didn't throw yourself away on him, my dear.'

'Yes, I know what that sneer means, Mr. Scarr; but perhaps he would not have turned out as he did if I had not been so cruel, and preferred one so much his—his'— Mrs. Scarr's feelings were too strong to permit her to seek for a proper epithet, therefore she left it to himself to fill up, in the meantime wiping her dry eyes with her scented handkerchief, the odorous exhalations of which appeared to slightly revive her, and added in sterner tone,—'What's the use of being a doctor's lady? I'm only a drudge, a fag;' and then, looking fiercely at the surgeon, she exclaimed, 'Dr. Scarr, I insist on going out; I insist on being taken out like other wives. Do you hear me, sir? You've driven me to this, you have; and so, mind, I'm going out with you to-day;' and she assumed a tragic air.

'My dear,' replied the surgeon in a deprecatory tone, 'consider—you were not asked.'

'And how dare any one ask you without me? Whoever asks a husband without his wife? And how dare you accept an invitation that does not include me?'

'But, my dear'—

'Yes, very dear!'

'It's private business.'

'Private business! of course it is—it always is. What private business can you have that I ought not to be acquainted with? There's no good comes of men having private business that they keep from their wives; that's what Mr. Topsham told his wife the evening he went out and gambled away her fortune, and came home at twelve o'clock and sneaked off with her gold watch, that he gave her as a wedding present, and played again and lost. It was private business that Mr. Julian had with some friend whom he used to go out of evenings to meet, and at last ran off with that hussy Jenny Bligh, leaving a sorrowing wife and six little children to lament their irreparable loss. It was private'—

'But, Mrs. Scarr,' interrupted the surgeon, 'I don't go out at night.'

'Don't you? Are you not out every night? Were you not out last night, and the night before—and'—

'But that was professionally.'

'Oh, of course, night or day, it's all the same, it's all professionally; and I stay at home professionally too, I suppose,—neglected, deserted, and left to pine away, professionally.' If Mrs. Scarr had any reference to her bodily condition, the pining away would have been an advantage.

'But, seriously, Selina dear, seriously'—the surgeon tried to look uxoriously.

'Don't call me Selina,—nor dear; I'm not your dear,—I *was* once.'

Here Mrs. Scarr sighed, took up her cup, twirled it, and looked again at the grounds, once more endeavouring to read her sad fate therein, and ascertain where it was likely to terminate; but there was nothing but hills and mountains, and so she laid it down, and threw herself, with a look of tragic despair, back in her seat, and fixed her eyes on vacancy. Unfortunately, Mrs. Scarr never could succeed, like other fond injured wives, in working herself into a melting mood. Whether the water supply was too deficient, or too remote, all effort to call up a tear always proved abortive, ending in a serio-comic scene very damaging to the intended effect; and so she had taken to the frown, and the scathing glance, and the injured-innocence taunt, supplemented by demands and threatenings, the latter, at more ungovernable periods, carried into action by impromptu assaults on such articles as happened at the instant to be in her way, some of which would take the direction of the surgeon's cranium, necessitating a sharp look-out.

Fearful of some such issue in the present case, the surgeon sat on the edge of his chair, hoping by silence to afford opportunity for the expenditure of the injured lady's wrath, and thereby avoid provoking the bursting of the storm, but, on failure thereof, to be prepared to act on the defensive.

Mrs. Scarr's massive bosom heaved with deep emotion, whilst awakened remembrances of past slights and wrongs, real and imaginary, stirred up her resentment, displaying itself by admonitory movements of her digits, of which the surgeon took due note. Unable longer to endure the irritating action, he thought it advisable to make one more attempt to allay the outraged feelings of his wife, ere they exploded.

'You know, you know, my dear.'

'I don't know, sir; how *should* I know? You never inform me of anything that's going on, do you?'

'Well, my dear, just hear me;—I was *going* to tell you—I'm *going* to tell you *now*. I'm to meet Mr. Hawkes to-day at dinner.'

'You told me that before,—and I'm going too.'

'But, Mrs. Scarr'—

'I'm going too,' in a louder key.

'Consider'—

'I'm going too,' shouted the resolute lady.

Whereupon Mr. Scarr's eyes opened to their full extent, and he became nervously sensible to the manipulation of the teacup. Evidently the crisis was approaching, and he grasped the end of the tablecloth, with the intention either to use it as a foil, or to dive his head under the table.

'Now mind that.' And she dashed the cup down upon the saucer on the table, and broke both into several pieces; whereat the surgeon, startled from his propriety, had nearly fallen off the edge of his chair, but let go the cloth and stood at bay.

The lady rose too, drew back from the table, and surveyed the wary surgeon from head to foot; then in a slow and emphatic tone repeated, 'I'm—going—too.' She walked majestically round the table, crossed the room with her arms folded and an air of defiance on her countenance, and opened the door; then turned towards the surgeon, who was watching her closely, and had grasped the chair in expectation of an attack, and, as she extended her arm, shook her finger at him, and, stamping her heavy foot, exclaimed, 'You heard, Mr. Scarr,—I'm going too;'

then disappeared, leaving the surgeon to congratulate himself that it had not terminated in a more violent manner.

‘What’s to be done?’ thought he; and then muttered, ‘Go she shan’t!’

He stood before the mirror, musing as to his wisest course under the difficulty. At one time it occurred to him to write and defer the appointment; then he thought it would be wiser to go out at once, as though with the intention of seeing a patient, and not return until after dinner; but the very idea of the dessert that in such case would await him at home, caused a shudder, and an instant dismissal of the idea. But this last proposition brought to his remembrance what it had escaped him to inform Mr. Grumphy of on the previous night, and that would therefore necessitate his immediately seeing him, lest he should be out of the way if deferred. Consequently he hurried off, in time, as already narrated in the last chapter, to find the assistant at his breakfast in Cranbourne Alley. After he had left Mr. Grumphy, he wiled away an hour or two around Leicester Square, down by the King’s Mews, on to the Horse Guards, and into the Park, revolving still the best mode of coming out of his dilemma, in this very unusual and unanticipated desire of his ‘larger proportion’ to participate in any recreation or social entertainment with himself, which could not have occurred at a more inopportune time.

At length, without having arrived at any conclusion, he re-entered the parlour in which the recent breakfast scene had occurred, and, to his consternation, found Mrs. Scarr in a light-brown silk dress, with lace cap and fancy streamers, lace collar and cuffs, her gold chain around her neck, and, in fact, arrayed in a mode that betokened her intention to carry out the morning’s decision.

With a rueful countenance he approached the mantelpiece, and abstractedly contemplated the appearance of his wife as represented in the mirror above it, which he had leisure to do, as she was apparently engaged in the earnest perusal of a book open before her on the table, but, judging from the fixed position of her eyes, the contents of which she was ignorant of. The surgeon closed his eyes, as though to shut out the undesirable vision, but not the entrance of a few thoughts that passed through his mind, by no means flattering to the amiable personage whose unalterable will was thus placing so serious an obstacle in the way of carrying out an interview on important business.

Closing the book, she looked up into the glass, and the movement causing the surgeon to re-open his eyes, they encountered hers. With a bland tone and smile she said, 'My dear.'

The surgeon turned round with an expression of surprise in his face at the altered manner, and a thought flashed upon him that she was relenting. In a tone equally bland he replied, 'Did you speak, my dear?'

'What o'clock is the dinner to take place at?'

'At Hawkes'?—at what hour does he expect *me*?—At three.'

'At three! Oh, then,' looking at her watch, 'it will soon be time to be putting on our things.'

The surgeon regarded her with an ill-concealed look of vexation, but which seemed to have quite an exhilarating effect upon the lady, for in a still more pleasant manner she inquired,

'Are there to be many guests? if so, I shall have to alter my dress.'

'None but our *two selves*,'—intending thereby to intimate his entertainer and himself, but which the pleasant lady affected to construe into meaning the surgeon and herself.

'Oh, none but *our two selves*! Then it won't be a very large dinner-party after all.'

'It's not intended to be a dinner-party at all,' said the surgeon a little petulantly, which Mrs. Scarr did not appear to notice, perhaps rather secretly enjoyed.

'Oh, I understand,—a social arrangement,—the two Hawkes and two Scarrs;—that *will be* social.'

'But Mrs. Hawkes will *not* be there; *she* will be from *home*.'

'Mrs. Hawkes from home! Oh, I see!' She knit her brows and puckered up her cheeks, as a new vision seemed to rise before her, and then, in a half-playful banter, she added, 'And so her pattern of a husband is giving a dinner-party on the strength of her absence! What loving husbands we have! Feels dull, I presume, poor man!—unable to endure his loneliness, and will avail himself of the occasion to descant on connubial bliss for *our* benefit.'

'But it's not a dinner-party,—it is not a dinner'—

'Well, so you said before. So, then, there's to be no one there but our *two selves*? It will be first-rate! But tell me, how came he to take it into his head to give a dinner-party at all?—he that was never known to be guilty of so great a piece of extravagance before,—and that, too, on a Sunday!—the pious man!'

The surgeon was about to reiterate his denial of its being a dinner-party, or a party at all, but his good lady interrupted him.

‘O yes, yes! I know he doesn’t call it a party,—it’s only pot-luck. He intends to surprise us. What a surprising man he is!—is he not, Doctor? and so good, too!’ (These allusions to the host’s goodness will be better understood on an acquaintance with him hereafter.) ‘But what has induced him to entertain at all?’

The surgeon was about to reply, but, waving her hand to intimate that she would save him the trouble, she continued in the same bantering style,—

‘O yes, I know!’ “Thank goodness,” says that paragon of husbands and saints, Hiram Hawkes, Esq., “my gentle half’s away. Now for a spiritual time with my devout friend Scarry; like myself, he’ll be delighted to be shot for once of his darling spouse, and we’ll drink ‘Absent wives, may they often be so.’”—Won’t he be disappointed!’

‘*Will* you allow me to explain, my dear?’

‘Silence, Scarr!’ Her tone was changing to irony of a graver kind. ‘I know it all,—with what heartiness you intended to drink that toast. Was it to be standing, Doctor, with three groans and a little one in? or in a bumper, with a hip, hip, and three times three?’

Mrs. Scarr became so delightfully carried off by her racy description of the anticipated marital festival, that she rose up at this part of her relation, and waved the book over her head, by way of illustrating the predicted hilarity of the two Benedicts at their temporary uxorial freedom; the cover unfortunately caught in the bow of her head-dress, and before she had time to arrest its progress, the loveliest coiffure in Mrs. Scarr’s possession was on the top of the fire, thereby bringing the vivacious lady’s elegant oration to an abrupt peroration. The surgeon, whose first impulse had been to start aside, under the impression that something was being purposely aimed at his head, as he comprehended his mistake, darted his hand into the fire, and—burnt it; whilst the lady, with greater presence of mind, seized the tongs, but, alas! before the tongs, which had a knack of refusing to open, could be separated, the head-dress was consumed, and, after two or three gyrations, it, or all that represented it, disappeared up the chimney.

‘There!’ exclaimed Mrs. Scarr, as she witnessed the departure

of the mimic fire-balloon,—‘there, how often I’ve spoken to you about those wretched tongs being made so as they could be used ;’ and, throwing them into the grate, much to the satisfaction of the surgeon, who preferred their reposing there to remaining in the lady’s hand, she added, ‘Now my cap’s gone, my very best, and I can’t go.’ Then, as the surgeon’s countenance lit up, changing her tone to conceal her vexation, she added, ‘How sorry you seem !’ Mr. Scarr thereupon tried to look so. ‘How sorry you will both be ! I feel for you, indeed I do. How you will pity your poor, dear, disappointed hermit at home !’

It will not cause surprise that the surgeon, despite his efforts to the contrary, was unable to control himself so as to prevent Mrs. Scarr detecting a feeling of relief at this unexpected deliverance ; and her keen eye no sooner did so, than, with an assumed composure, and as though deliberating with herself, she said, ‘Well, after all, on second thoughts, perhaps I could make my blond lace cap do with the gauze riband ;’ and she looked quite appealingly at the surgeon, as though expecting his ready concurrence in her suggestion. A slight twinkle of the eye, and a slight, almost imperceptible curl of the lip, indicated her inward enjoyment at the beclouded face of her husband. ‘Don’t you think that would do very well ?’ said she in a deferential tone. But as the surgeon gave no further indication of his feelings, after a little more by-play, such as an angler might employ with a sulky fish, she again relieved him by stating ‘that now she recollected the blond was too rumpled, and therefore she would be obliged to forego his intended kindness, and permit him to depart without her ;’ and which no doubt was her intention from the first, or at least as soon as she had satisfied herself on certain particulars in regard to the projected dinner. This her imperious manner, with some tact, had enabled her to do, and to assure herself that it was only one of those professional consultations, by no means uncommon in the course of their married life, which, for the more private discussion of the business in hand, advantage had been taken of Mrs. Hawkes’ absence to transact at a *tête-à-tête* meal. So, like many a greater mind, having displayed her power to curb and rule when she chose, as well as gratified her splenetic disposition in torturing her victim and enjoying his writhings, she was satisfied, and, as a consequence, would console herself in his absence, as otherwise her fretful, discontented temperament would not have permitted.

CHAPTER VII.

SABBATH SCRUPLES.

ABOUT midway between the Elephant and Castle and Bricklayers' Arms on the Old Greenwich Road, on the south side, was a range of genteel brick buildings, situated a short distance off the road, and forming a terrace; they were occupied mostly by persons doing business in the east end of London, who, after the fatigues of the day, sought at this distance to delude themselves into the idea that they lived out of town, and had escaped from its smoky denser atmosphere.

When not specially engaging a hack, those persons living along the line of road usually availed themselves of the Greenwich coaches, then the only public conveyances between that place, including Deptford, and London, by which they were dropped or taken up at their several doors on the road to and fro.

In front of the buildings just mentioned, and along the foot-path, from which it was railed off, ran a cold, dank sheet of water, suggesting a miniature lake, which, with a few trees planted around, contributed towards the aforesaid delusion of the occupants, of having retired to their country residences; and, further to aid in the illusion and lend a poetic charm to the locality, a mythical figure had been posed in the centre of the pool, in a semi-recumbent position, on a pedestal of stone, which, with its head turned aslant, was holding to his lips a curved horn, or cornucopian-shaped instrument, through which he blew, with praiseworthy persistence, a continuous stream, not to any surprising distance, but higher than any ordinary being could be supposed to eject the same quantity, and which then descended in a parabolic curve to the pool beneath.

One effect of this performance, and a rather undesirable one, was that it interfered with the fancied seclusion and retirement

of the inhabitants of this rural spot; as, besides arresting the attention of the passers-by, who halted to make an inspection thereof, and of such of the residents as were promenading on the terrace, all the children in the neighbourhood usually congregated along the attractive line. Many were the speculations which the brilliant conception of the artist called forth from the juvenants. 'How did he do it? Where did the water come from? his mouth couldn't hold it all,—it came from his stomach.' Whilst some brighter genius assured them it came from his brain, for 'his little baby brother died, 'cause the water on it wouldn't come off.' But as each attempted solution was contested as soon as advanced by some wiser infantile, who had his own theory, the engima might have remained an enigma still, had it not occurred to one precocious Toodles, an evident sign that he was not long for this world, as he stood on the coping endeavouring to squeeze his head through the iron railing, to the manifest alarm of his female attendant, that 'the man had been bathing and was "*getting*" drowned, only he climbed on to the rock;' and as half-drowned people are known to imbibe an inconvenient quantity of water, he was riddening himself of the superfluity by means of the trumpet,—a thought, if it has not previously occurred, is suggested for the consideration of the Humane Society. The only dissentient from this profound idea was a little maid of four summers, who 'was sure he wasn't drowned, or he would not be there,—would he? He was a *neddy* that lived in a shell at the bottom of the water, because he had no clothes on, which they never had, cause nurse said they'd wet them.' However, without disparaging this ingenious conception of the young lady, the preference was given to the former theory, which thenceforth became the traditional explanation. 'These assemblies, and the usual proportion of stones flying towards the windows as they missed the figure utilized as a cockshy, or bounded over the water on which they had been intended to skim in making ducks and drakes, made things lively about the terrace, and therefore will create no surprise that they detracted somewhat from the agreeableness of the situation.

It was in one of these houses that Hiram Hawkes, Esq., had taken up his abode, which, though not furnished with the elegance of some of his neighbours of less pretensions, was in most respects equipped as respectably as expected from a gentleman enjoying only a moderate practice; for Mr. Hawkes was, as described in legal documents emanating from his office, 'a gent one etc.'; or,

as translated into ordinary phraseology, one of the Attorneys of His Majesty's Court of King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer, as also a Solicitor of the High Court of Chancery, duly enrolled.

His office was in the heart of the city, situated in Barge Yard, Bucklersbury. By those of the profession who had been called to do business with him, he was considered and bore the character of a sharp practitioner, one from whom no favour might be expected, and of course, in retaliation, to whom none was accorded, or seldom; and which latter proceeding was considered by Mr. Hawkes as evidencing a lack of that *esprit de corps* that ought to exist between members of the same profession, and by which he justified his own conduct.

Cases do occasionally occur in the conduct of a suit in which the more liberal members find it the wiser policy, as well as the more honourable, to accord grace to each other, especially in those instances where, from unintentional laxity or oversight in certain *forms* of procedure, advantage could be taken, to the discredit of the opposing attorney and detriment of his client, but on a due representation of which, men in the higher walks of the profession would scorn to profit by when the issue does not affect the merits,—not the substance but the form; the contrary method of which, together with some other unworthy modes, constitutes what is termed sharp practice, tending to bring obloquy on such as condescend thereto, and generally to stamp them as hard, mean, griping souls, not unfrequently esteeming their own client as lawful prey. The occurrence of such opportunities, in the times of which we write, being much more frequent than now, owing to the more complex nature of proceedings prior to their abolishment by the 'Uniformity of Process' and other Acts, rendered such lapses too often the pettifogger's opportunity.

In person Mr. Hawkes was of medium stature and rather slender; his hair, originally of a brownish cast, was slightly grey, inclined to curl all round in drake-like stubs, irregularly parted, and brushed smoothly down on both sides, with a slight inclination of the portion on the right side to rising above the temple; the forehead large, but flat; his grey, dreamy eyes were surmounted by thin brows inclining to grey, as also was the small quantity of whiskers allowed to grow in the vicinity of his ears; the cheek-bones high, whilst the cheeks were sunken; a large nose and wide mouth, with compressed lips, gave a sinister

expression, added to by a sharp chin partially shaded underneath by a slender growth of grey hairs ; a white neckcloth, with a clerical tie, imparted something of a saintly air, which his being always habited in black, also of a clerical cut, and his shoes covered by black gaiters, assisted, rendering it at times doubtful to strangers to which profession he belonged.

Added to a description of his professional character, it is essential to a correct comprehension of the man, and in explanation of the reason of his appearance as just described, to glance at his moral qualities. It is not pleasant to portray such, nor in the interest of poor human nature that such should be too palpably outlined, lest the prejudice, already deep in our estranged hearts, become the more strongly rooted, and the antagonism we would deprecate be strengthened against the truer, the better type of men to be found in the legal as well as other classes of our common humanity, and of which such as these are but the perverts, the base counterfeits.

There had come a time in the course of Mr. Hawkes' life in which he had been visited with serious and alarming compunctions of conscience : it might be the reaction resulting from some more flagrant legal procedure than usual, or the convictions pressed home upon that conscience through supernatural agency by the memory of past wrong-doing ; the past panorama'd with fearful distinctness, and with a vividness that almost exceeds the reality, as such know who have ever undergone the lashings of an 'outraged conscience.' There, spread out before them, are the old cards held in other days, and a reconsideration of the game that was played is compelled : the wrong card knowingly and covertly laid down, but unrevoked ; the bad play, the trick—ay, the odd, the very odd—trick that won the game ; the honors counted where no honour was ; the misdeal that changed the play ; the lead too closely followed ; the shuffle and the rub—well, not yet played out or won, but adumbrated in the coming time when the golden heap will be clutched, but which when grasped will resolve into fearful loss.

To Mr. Hawkes the hour of decision had come, when he was deliberately to determine either to carry out his life purpose,—to be rich at any hazard, and to rush on in the race along the unhallowed course ; or to step outside the lines at once, and work and wait, content that the reward of righteous toil come in righteous ways or not at all. Long he weighed and re-weighed the odds, and of course he lost ; for in such case, when a man

begins to reason, the odds are against him,—he reasons with one too great an adept in the specious puttings of his arguments to be outwitted,—and so he suggested a compromise of the bankrupt conscience, by compounding for a fraction of honesty or of justice so small, so infinitesimal, that, immeasurably outweighed by the heap of chicanery, the double fistfuls of unwholesome law, the scale would have flown up, have kicked the beam at once, but that the wily prompter, the official assignee, perched on the centre of the balance during the debate, kicked up his heels in mad delight at the secured victim, and, vaulting on to the losing end of the beam, brought it down. And thus Mr. Hawkes bribed his conscience, and from that day simulated a sanctity that was to cover up all ; but the garb in which he enveloped himself was so very thin, so transparent, that the flimsy gauze revealed the man it was employed to cover in an even less agreeable aspect than he would have appeared without it. Thenceforth no man was more regularly found in his pew on the Sabbath mornings, or more stately at its communion service ; none more attentive to the forms of religion, or exhibited more deference to minister or church members, and in recognition thereof, his trusty friend, who had assisted at the weighing, whispered he was good, good as he could be, and ‘not as other men ;’ and thus, laying the flattering unction to his soul, he joined the masquers’ revelry, and in the droll character of the devil’s lawyer played his part, hurrying on with the jolly motley crowd for his share of the brimstone.

Returned from church, where he had taken so sonorous a part in the responses as to elicit the admiration of the old lady in the pew in front, and with whom after the service he discoursed on the merits of the sermon, little more of which than the text he had heard, Mr. Hawkes stood at the window of the front room, looking at the water-spouting figure, debating in his mind the propriety of permitting such an ebullition on the Sabbath, when his deliberations were interrupted by the pulling up of a stage on the street, and in another minute he saw Dr. Scarr making his way to the terrace, and hastened down-stairs to admit him.

‘Hope I have not kept you waiting, Hawkes?’ said the surgeon as he entered.

‘In good time, Doctor ;—not long home myself—was at church as usual—beautiful sermon—heavenly discourse—wish you had heard it.’

'What was the text?' said the surgeon, as they mounted the stairs, and with a sneer on his countenance.

'The text,' said the lawyer, as they entered the room and seated themselves;—'the text! dear me, that's strange now! it's gone from me,—somewhere, I think, in the Epistle of Luke. Wives or husbands,—I forget which,—submit yourselves even as the Church, which is a great mystery, or something like that.'

'It is, it is,' said the surgeon, with an instinctive shrug, 'a great mystery, a great mystery not to be comprehended. I was listening to such a sermon myself this morning,—I presume it must have been from the same text.'

'Strange coincidence, Doctor! Ah, it's a very striking text, is it not? Glad you were at church for once. Blessed thing to begin the day well,—it's such a solace; adds amazing relish to a dinner; and will render our interview so much more enjoyable. How little the gay and thoughtless world thinks of these things, as I sometimes say to myself when I watch the crowds going down to Greenwich to run down Astrologer's Hill in the Park, or to spy through the old pensioner's glass on One-tree Hill, or to ride on the donkeys on Blackheath. Did you ever do those wicked things, Doctor, in your youthful days? Alas, how many bitter repentings those sinful pleasures have cost me, and left some scars I shall carry to the grave!'

'That was the result of not being accustomed to ride on donkeys, I suppose,' said the surgeon.

The lawyer looked at his friend, not understanding his mode of accounting for the scars, but just at that moment the maid-of-all-work announced that dinner awaited them.

'Come along, Doctor,—nothing but a plain dinner; never allow *much* cooking on Sundays.' This was in accord with the compromise; and thereupon the surgeon seated himself, whilst his host stood, and, slightly inclining his head towards the roast-beef before him, appeared to be muttering an address, and which, being a novel proceeding to the guest, he concluded from the Amen, the only word he caught, that he had been repeating the morning's text, and thereupon conceived it right to again concur in its wisdom, and exclaimed,—

'Ah, yes, sir, it's a mystery—it's a mystery,' which caused Mr. Hawkes, who was in the act of raising the dish-cover, to hesitate and regard the surgeon with a puzzled look, and then observe,—

'Mystery!' My dear sir, it's off the choicest part. Don't be afraid,

Doctor,—always order the dinner myself. Allow me to help you,—outside cut?’

In another minute both were doing justice to the viands before them.

‘How thankful,’ said Mr. Hawkes, who had not interrupted the silence until he had disposed of the large plateful to which he had helped himself, bearing a contrast to the much smaller quantity allotted to his guest,—‘how thankful we should be that we have such beef, sir,’—at the same time helping himself to another slice. ‘Thank you for some vegetables. Excuse me,—didn’t see your plate was empty. Allow me. Yes, there’s no beef like the roast-beef of Old England,—is there, Doctor?’

‘Decidedly not,’ said the surgeon, looking critically at the thin slice to which he had been assisted, ‘only it tastes of the knife.’

‘Tastes of the knife! I hope not. Dear me, what’s a matter with the knife?’ and he took up the carver and examined it, but, discovering nothing, presumed he meant his own knife, and thereupon offered another, but which the surgeon declined, preferring a larger piece of meat instead.

The dinner having come to an end, the decanter and glasses were deposited on the cleared table, and the two gentlemen discussed for a time the virtues of wine in general, the surgeon avoiding any eulogistic reference to the rather insipid stuff before them.

‘Dr. Scarr,’ at length exclaimed the lawyer, deeming it time to approach the matter that had brought them together, ‘I should hesitate to broach the subject for our afternoon’s consideration, were it not that the scriptural axiom lays it down that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath,—lawful for you to visit and care for the bodily state of your patient; lawful for me to attend to the temporal welfare of my client—to a certain extent, of course. You concur, Doctor?’ Mr. Hawkes assumed a demure look as he awaited the surgeon’s answer, but as the latter had no scruples of conscience to quiet, he made no response, but, raising his filled glass towards the light, looked at it for a second, and, swallowing the contents, replaced it on the table and then refilled it.

‘You don’t think it’s wrong, Doctor, eh?’

‘What’s wrong, Hawkes?’ said the surgeon, as he put the glass to his lips, and, without **tasting**, laid it on the table again, his fingers still resting on the stem.

‘Ah, I thought not. Don’t like cant—pure and undefiling is

to visit the sick—that's it. You see how Scripture upholds you, Doctor.'

'Very right, too,' assented the surgeon, 'for if we didn't visit the sick, why,—they wouldn't visit us, I'm afraid.'

'Most undoubtedly. Well remarked. Time is short, and we must do good whilst we can, even though by stealth, as I always advocate.'

'I presume, Hawkes, your good is mostly done in that direction. Your profession has made you familiar with cases needing such stealthy procedure;' and he looked at him significantly through his half-closed eyes.

'Ah, Doctor, you're right—quite right. If you only knew the harrowing cases that almost daily present themselves to me, and how, forgetful of my own interests, I advise patient submission to injuries, especially where the party can't afford to sue, and is poor. "He that hath pity on the poor;"—you know the rest.' Affected by this allusion to his charitable actions, he turned his eyes toward the ceiling and sighed.

'You're a marvel of goodness, sir. But about this business,' pulling out his watch; 'time's flying, time's flying.'

'O yes, about the little business, or rather matter, that brought us together. I don't like business on Sundays; we'll only talk over it, and act on the secular days of the week.'

Re-filling their emptied glasses, Mr. Hawkes resumed, 'With reference to that boy whose best interests have a warm place in my heart,'—here Mr. Hawkes inadvertently placed his hand on his waistcoat pocket, but then the pocket was, of course, over or near the locality of ordinary people's hearts,—'and my attention to which often interferes with more lucrative business, and disturbs my more peaceful hours, when, retired to rest, and during the time that should be given to sleep, I disturb Mrs. Hawkes by my moans, and she detects the words, "Boy, boy," and the dear soul punches me, and remonstrates.'

'Nightmare, nightmare,' muttered the surgeon. 'Never mind your dreams; what do you propose?'

'There's the difficulty. I have proposed a dozen things, but each of which, on reconsideration, I have abandoned, lest it should not turn out for his moral'—

'Never mind the moral,' chimed in the surgeon, by way of cutting short a threatened prologue on moral duties and requirements.

'O fie, Doctor! Well would it be for me had I your

happy knack of taking things less keenly to heart; but these serious considerations for others' weal oppress me and affect me so, that they are making me old before the time;' and he stroked his head and played with his whiskers.

Without attending to this observation, the surgeon remarked, 'In the first place, the schoolmaster's bill for the last half-year, that I sent you the amount of, is to be paid, the items of which stand thus,—pulling the bill out of his pocket,—

“ Board and tuition, etc., of Master Trelawney			
—half-year, . . .	£	10	0 0
Additional as parlour boarder, . .		2	10 0
Pocket-money—26 weeks at 6d., . .		0	13 0
Sundry breakages, etc., . . .		0	5 9
			<hr/>
			£13 8 9”

He threw the account over to the lawyer.

'Doctor, Doctor, this is not the day for going into such matters. There's a time to dance, and a time to sing, and a time'—

'To pay bills,' said the surgeon, 'and no time like the present.'

'Ha, ha! but you're a wicked dog. I hope, as I esteem you, you'll one day see your error and repent. I'll pray for you.'

'Do, do, but let it be after you pay the bill.'

'You're incorrigible. But don't you think the pocket-money's too much, and the sundries extravagant, and then the charge for parlour boarder?'

'Mr. Hawkes,' said the surgeon, 'it's too late to discuss that after it has been sanctioned; it must be paid. But we are met to consider the future disposal of this boy. In your note you stated you concurred in opinion with me that before long some definite course would have to be taken, as he is becoming too old to remain at school; and also made some suggestions in which I agree with you.'

'I knew you would; only you will do me the justice to remember that it was during the week such thoughts occurred.'

'Certainly, certainly; these sort of thoughts don't trouble you much on Sundays.'

The tone in which this was uttered might have been taken to imply that the surgeon inclined to a somewhat different opinion; but Mr. Hawkes accepted it as a recognition of the proper channel in which his thoughts did run on the seventh day, and

consequently was now prepared to proceed, as his delay in coming to the point was occasioned by his anxiety to fend off the business until he had sugared it over with a thick enough coat of religious frosting to satisfy his scruples, and permit him to go into a Sunday discussion thereof.

‘Has anything further suggested itself to you as to the boy’s disposal?’ added the surgeon.

‘What do you say to making a parson of him?’

‘If he’s fit for nothing else.’

‘Now, Doctor, Doctor! Consider, sir—consider the sacred office.’ Not that Mr. Hawkes, for several reasons, especially the financial, had any serious intention of providing for the boy in such a way; but in commencing with divinity, he was throwing another sop to conscience. ‘Well, if you object, what say you to a lawyer?’

‘Profession’s overdone; besides, he’d become too ’cute for us,—preparing a rod for our own backs.’

‘Ah, never thought of that! It’s too learned a profession for such a boy.’

‘Make a surgeon of him.’

“‘Throw physic to the dogs.” Ha, ha, Scarr! had ye there.’

Either Mr. Hawkes’ memory was at fault, or the wine was somewhat affecting his sense of propriety, for had it occurred to him he was employing a histrionic quotation on a Sunday, he must have been considerably shocked. However, wherever the physic might be thrown, or however disposed of, the surgeon had predetermined that, as there was a valuable consideration connected with the settlement of the boy, about whom they appeared to be mutually interested, he should be articulated to himself; and consequently, as he never yielded, except to Mrs. Scarr, in the end his arguments prevailed, and it was agreed that the youth should hereafter, when taken from school, pursue his studies for the medical profession under the watchful oversight of Dr. Scarr; as, for certain reasons that will hereafter appear, it was mutually conceded he would be safest under such guardianship. But in assenting thereto, the scrupulous attorney insisted on a proviso having reference to his moral supervision, which was readily agreed to, Mrs. Scarr being selected as the benignant preceptress through whom the moral truths were to be inculcated. However, for prudential reasons, it was decided that he should remain at the school for the present, his withdrawal therefrom to be dependent on some future contingency,

which it was not at all improbable the surgeon's pecuniary necessities might considerably hasten or interfere with.

As he rose to depart, the surgeon once more reminded the attorney to forward the amount of the schoolmaster's account on the Monday, to which the latter assented; and, with some lingering thought that possibly some adverse impression might have been made on his friend's mind by the afternoon's secular proceedings, he added,—

'I trust, Doctor, you don't consider our conversation has been too much of a worldly nature. You know the Scriptures enjoin'—

'I don't know— I don't know what they enjoin,' replied the surgeon, who, having gained his end, was less guarded in the display of his hasty temper. 'I have no time to read them;' and then, looking at him with his eyes somewhat dilated, said in a tone that rather disconcerted the pious attorney, 'If I *did*, I'd *attend* to them! Good morning!' and a stage passing at the time, he ran out and hailed it, and, climbing into the dickey, was off.

'I don't know what'll become of that man when he dies,' sighed Mr. Hawkes, as he closed the door. 'I hope he'll not go where the wicked cease from troubling, but I'm very much afraid. Don't read the Scriptures!' As he said this he re-entered the sitting-room, and, mechanically opening the Bible, which was placed conspicuously on the table, he read, 'The hope of the hypocrite shall perish,' and immediately closed it, and filled out and drank another glass of wine. Throwing himself into his chair, he sat musing on the dangerous state of his friend, until he fell into a fitful sleep, and presently was in the dickey with the surgeon, remonstrating at his impiety; and anon they were at the latter's house, when, as they stepped up to the door, it flew open of its own accord, and a lady of unearthly material, but in features resembling the angelic Mrs. Scarr, welcomed them home; then, as he gazed on her, the lady's material dissolved into a transparency, and a small stove full of live coal was burning in her bosom, in the region usually occupied by the heart, and she seized her loving spouse and clasped him to her breast, avowing she loved him with a warmth indescribable, so fierce that it was consuming her; and she shrieked in his ear, and demanded if he didn't feel she did; and then he felt all aglow, and said he did feel it, and that it was too hot, and soon he screamed and gnashed his teeth, for the red-hot heart had burned into his heart, which was now red-hot too; then somehow, not quite comprehensible, the lady of the burning heart had got him,

Hawkes, into her loving embrace, and was hugging and pressing him in the same manner as she had done her husband, despite his earnest and—this time at least—sincere remonstrances against the impropriety of such conduct in the presence of her husband, reminding her that it was said that the woman should cleave to her husband, but whereat she only grinned a sardonic grin and hugged the tighter, until he felt uncomfortably warm, and the live coals fell into his bosom and burnt furiously; whereupon half-a-dozen copper-coloured little fellows, with horns poking out of their temples, each exhibiting a club foot and waving three-pronged toasters in their claws, commenced a cabalistic dance around the surgeon and himself, singing to a strange weird-like tune the words, 'There's a time to dance, and a time to sing, and a time to pay bills, and no time like the present.' At the close of each repetition of the merry chant, they recommenced prodding them both with their toasters, under the particular direction of the moral lady of the burning heart, until finally they drove them through a door, whence, as it opened into a floorless room, from the depths below came the sound of revelry and a nasty smell of brimstone, and gassy jets of fire shot up; and the voices were jubilant as one sang to the other, 'Hurrah for glum Scarry and pious Hawkey to boot!' and then arose a wild chorus of 'Hurrah, hurrah for glum Scarry and pious Hawkey to boot!' But just as he was falling headlong after the surgeon into the pit with a shriek, a loud cry of Hawkes, Hawkes! startled him from his frightful dream, and, jumping up in terror, he grasped, as he imagined, the lady directress of that dismal swamp, but it was not,—it was Mrs. Hawkes, who had just returned from her Sunday employment, and had entered the room at the moment when her husband uttered the shriek on his descent into Hades, and thereupon ran in alarm to his assistance. Quite unaccustomed to such strong demonstrations of affection, Mrs. Hawkes' alarm was not abated by the fervour of her husband's embrace, and but for the timely arrival of Mr. Hawkes, junior, she might have succumbed and gone off in a faint; but, by the assistance of the last-named member of the family, the excited Mr. H. senior was gradually calmed down, and, on sufficiently recovering to recall all the circumstances, he very judiciously resolved never to invite so wicked a man to his house again on Sunday.

As the lady last introduced will not make any figure in these annals, it will be sufficient to say of her, in few words, that, by

way of support to her husband's sanctity, she had become a member of a tract society, and on this Sabbath had been attending the monthly meeting, at which, in unison with some other matrons, she had been laudably employed in apportioning the labours for the next four weeks of the more juvenile ladies,—how juvenile further than they were spinsters cannot be stated,—and whose duty it was to go into the by-streets and alleys on Sunday afternoons to distribute a certain quantity of invaluable little *brochures* to the squalid, godless tenants thereof, the most of whom, being unable to read, evidenced their appreciation of such disinterested generosity by applying them to useful purposes, though not those contemplated by the fair distributors. As the place of meeting was in the neighbourhood of Lambeth, Mrs. Hawkes had after church gone home with Mrs. Brown, the president of the association, to dine, she residing in that locality.

Of Mr. Hawkes, junior, it will be necessary to speak more at large. He was a young gentleman of about twenty-three; but, though deriving his Christian name from the same source as his worthy father, he had thus far given very little promise of any special virtue derived therefrom, or of even resembling that scrupulous parent, or his zealous mother; indeed, so early did Master Zenas exhibit signs of having thrown down the gauntlet in defiance of their principles, that he was only a few days old before his diminutive finger-nails inflicted some tokens of his depravity on the bosom from which he derived his lactean nourishment, and which was soon followed up by sundry dental attacks of his incisors, which, like the nails, were developed remarkably early, causing his good mother to be *more* than jubilant thereat. In fine, as Master Zenas grew, he became more and more obstreperous, and the occasion of much grave debate between the excellent parents as to whence their son and heir inherited such a manifested antipathy to good things,—that is, of a moral quality, for he was rather partial to good things partaking of a carnal smack; and furthermore, it was the cause of recrimination, as, in default of other solution of the anomaly, the one charged it upon the other. In vain did the maternal parent protest against the charge that he 'sucked it in with his mother's milk,' and, as a counteractant, insist on his accompanying her, during his younger years, to all religious ordinances as well as her meetings and associations, but which appeared to have an opposite effect to that intended. In vain, too, did his virtuous father question him, on his return from such places, as to the

particular benefit derived from his attendance thereat. But what most affected him—because, in his estimation, the essence of a sermon and its beneficial teachings consisted in such remembrance—was that he never could name the text or give the faintest reference thereto; indeed, to have done so would have argued, if nothing on the score of piety, at least more than ordinary genius, seeing that he rarely ever heard it, as, before the service had arrived at that stage, reposing in the further corner of the pew, he had become oblivious to all save the continued and stealthy nudges and shakes of Mrs. Hawkes, and which occasionally elicited a stretch, and a yawn, and a rearrangement for a more comfortable nap, to the scandal of the next pew. If he had a preference to any portion of the service, it was shown in the earlier part, during the use of the prayer-book, when, having lost the ‘order’ thereof in turning from one portion to the other, he usually retired to a hassock, where, out of sight, he employed himself in perusing the part referring to ‘Gunpowder Treason,’ that being a portion he was partial to, it being associated in his ideas with bonfires.

As he grew older he continued to evince a still more decided hostility to better things, but especially to the Sabbath,—the more remarkable since his training had borne such especial reference to its sanctity, that he had been prohibited from laughing or indulging in any outward sign of boyish glee, or even expression of fatigue beyond a sigh, of which, however, to do him justice, on that day he had an inexhaustible stock. And thus, as he entered on his teens, he became so enamoured of worldly ways and amusements, that one of Mrs. Hawkes’ serious matronly friends ventured to insinuate her doubts whether he was one of ‘the elect,’ whilst *more* than *one* went so far as to pronounce him ‘reprobate,’ an opinion in which, though Mrs. Hawkes could not be expected to concur, she could not refrain from entertaining some grave doubts about,—so singular, too, as, in unison with her friends, they had taken great pains to *select* an uncommon name for him, one not only of scriptural sanction, but foreshadowing his future secular occupation, and which, after some days’ search and consultation, they had discovered,—one exactly suitable occurring at the conclusion of one of the epistles, and reading thus, ‘Bring Zenas the lawyer.’ But, alas! except in name and profession, the young Hawkes, on reaching maturity, bore no affinity to his namesake, for Zenas Hawkes was then pronounced a gay, naughty young man.

CHAPTER VIII.

‘CAN A WOMAN FORGET HER SUCKING CHILD?’

AFTER the surgeon had led, or rather dragged, Willie into the surgery, leaving the door ajar, he returned to assure himself that the assistant had left the premises. Satisfied on this head, he instructed the boy to say that he was engaged, should he be wanted, and re-entered the room and closed the door.

During his temporary absence Willie had stood on the same spot on which he had left him; a gloomy shade was over the apartment, occasioned by the dull flicker of the small lamp, but a rapid survey of the room by the lad, whom the sombre appearance had somewhat awed, made him aware of the presence of another person; of this, however, he had only time to be sensible before the surgeon returned and closed the door.

As he seated himself in his chair he drew the boy towards him, and, after mechanically smoothing his hair, lifted him on to his knee, and asked him a few questions as to his thoughts about going to school, of which he supposed Mr. Grumphy had informed him all particulars and the intention of sending him at once.

Without regarding the surgeon's attempt at friendliness, or bestowing further notice on him beyond a whispered yes and no to such remarks as required a reply, the child, shrinking from the stern man's cold manner, had continued to fix his eyes on the stranger, who by this time he saw was a female, but, being completely enveloped in a cloak, that neither the season of the year nor the closeness of the room rendered needful, he was unable to identify either figure or face, the latter being also veiled. On concluding his remarks to the boy, the surgeon looked over to the lady, and said, addressing her,—

‘This, madam, is the little boy that we are about sending to school, Willie Wilton,’—adding, as though he had forgotten it,

'the boy I was telling you of;' and then, standing him on the floor, by a slight push intimated that he was to approach the lady.

The person addressed raised her veil, and, throwing it back, beckoned to Willie to advance; but, without moving, he fixed his eyes on her features, and there passed over him a faint, dreamy memory that at some time and some where he had more than once seen that face, or one exactly like it.

'Boy,' said the surgeon, in a tone very unlike the one he had just simulated, and which caused the child to start, 'go over to that lady.'

Willie hesitated, and advanced one foot only, dropped his eyes towards the floor, and began nervously twitching his fingers.

In a silvery, half-plaintive voice the lady said, 'Willie, love, won't you come to me?' and she extended her hand towards him. There was something so assuring in the tone and action, especially in her familiar use of his name, that the boy raised his eyes and returned her smile, and slowly moved towards her. The lady rose to meet him, and, unable longer to restrain her emotion, stooped and clasped the fair boy to her bosom, and, with a pathos that almost moved the heart of the stoical surgeon, exclaimed, 'Oh, Willie!' and then smothered his face with kisses; the boy felt there were tears, too, mingled with those kisses, and he looked up half sorry. For a brief space she appeared to be struggling with her emotions to overcome them, but the convulsive tremor told the bitterness of the struggle. The surgeon felt uneasy, rose, and approached her with a deprecatory glance, whispered a few words, and left the room.

The door was scarcely closed, when the lady, who appeared relieved by his withdrawal, led the boy to the dim light at the table, and, as she seated herself, looked eagerly into his face, drew her soft, delicate hand through his flaxen hair, and smoothed it off his polished forehead. A shade of sadness passed over her countenance, and she involuntarily closed her eyes as though something had pained her,—it might be a fancied likeness. As she reopened them she knelt by the boy, and once more looked into his face with an intensity that indicated she was gloating on the upturned, beautifully-moulded features. She kissed his forehead and lips again and again, and in impassioned tones exclaimed, 'Oh, Willie, Willie! Dear Willie!' Moved by sympathy,—it may have been by a more powerful instinct,—the boy threw his arms around the neck of the distressed lady, and,

kissing her with a warmth that told how he was moved at her grief, he said,—

‘What makes you cry? Is he sending *you* to school? Oh, Aunt says it’s a great place for boys, and I daresay for girls too. Don’t cry.’

‘And are you pleased at going to school?’ said the lady, over whose countenance a pleasant expression passed as she listened to the musical cadence of the boy’s voice, and comprehended the sympathy implied in the artless words and manner.

‘Well, Aunt says it’s best, though I don’t want to leave *her*.’

‘But how does Aunt know?’

‘Because she knows everything. If you only heard what she knows, and tells me too ;—you just come, won’t you?’

‘And where does she live?’

‘Why, she lives—next to the bird shop. Oh, you should see the beautiful birds there!’ and he tossed his head and clapped his hands together. ‘If you only heard the parrot screech, you’d stop your ears. Come to-morrow; the shop will be open then, and I’ll show you the guinea-pigs and the goldfinches.’

‘But you have not told me the street;’ and she imprinted some further kisses upon the face that during this description had been kindling with animation.

‘Oh, I don’t know the street’s name, but Mr. Grumphy does. I’ll ask him, and he’ll tell you when he comes back.’

‘And who’s Mr. Grumphy?’

‘Mr. Grumphy!—why, don’t you know? Everybody in our street knows him; and I’ll tell you what Mary says they call him,’ and he lowered his voice and whispered close to her ear, ‘glumpy;’ and he started back with a short laugh, but immediately relapsed into a more serious look as he added, ‘But Aunt says it’s wrong to call names,—and so it is, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, love, very wrong. But tell me, do you love Aunt?’

He looked at her from head to foot, as though puzzled at the question.

‘Love Aunt?—I should think I do; and she loves me too.’

‘Do you love her more than’—me, she was about to say, but added, ‘more than any one else,’ laying a stress on the word any.

‘Of course I do; and so would you if you knew her.’

She breathed a sigh, and kissed him.

‘Will you love me too, Willie?’ and she looked almost imploringly into his face.

'O yes ; Auntie says I ought to love everybody.'

This did not satisfy her. Her heart was evidently yearning for the superior love of the fascinating child, whose eye, caught by the sparkling ring on her finger, had taken the latter in his hand, and was examining the gem.

'Willie,' said she appealingly, 'could not you love me best of all?'

He let go her hand, looked into her face, and then his little fingers began to play with her ringlets, but said nothing. She repeated the question with increased earnestness, adding some endearing terms, as though to bribe the desired response. The boy appeared embarrassed, and then in an equally appealing and earnest tone said,—

'Well—you know—I couldn't do that.'

A shade passed over the features of the lady, as she clasped her hands, and exclaimed with some bitterness, 'No, no, you could not do that!' and she covered her face with her hands.

Willie was once more puzzled. Softly he passed one arm around the neck of the poor stricken one, and with the other removed her hands from her face and kissed her with a long, strong kiss, and then said softly, 'I'll love you next best.'

'Will you, darling,—will you so love me, sweet one?' said the lady, and she pressed him to her bosom and passionately returned his kisses ; then rose from her kneeling position, seated herself on the chair, and buried her face in her handkerchief, as the door opened, and the surgeon entered, and intimated that it was time the boy should return, as the person who brought him was waiting for him. She attempted to rise and restrain her feelings, but, seeing the boy's pitying glance, she was again overcome, and, as she sunk back into the chair, covered her face once more, and uttered an hysterical sob.

The surgeon took hold of the boy's hand, his eyes still fastened on the distressed woman, and led him out of the surgery ; but as he closed the door he said coldly, 'Did you bid the lady'—then correcting himself, designedly said—'Mrs. Scarr, good-bye?'

'Was that Mrs. Scarr?' said the boy, as he looked into the surgeon's face, and, slipping his hand out of the Doctor's, he ran back to the lady, reached up his face and kissed her, but which her emotion prevented her returning, and saying, 'Good-bye, good-bye. Don't cry,—I won't be away long,' hastened back to

the surgeon, who handed him over to the assistant, remarking as he did so,—

‘The vessel is not to sail for a few days yet, it appears. I’ll give you further instructions as to the time.’ Upon which he opened the door and watched them as they returned home, until they turned toward Tavistock Street. A coach drew up to the door, and he re-entered the surgery to acquaint the lady that it was waiting for her.

Assuming as strong a control over her feelings as she was able, she rose, and, as she drew the cloak around her and let down the veil over her face, she said to the surgeon, ‘Dr. Scarr, you will, I am sure, give great charges about Willie, and direct that he shall have the best treatment, regardless of expense.’

The surgeon bowed, and promised everything should be done to ensure his proper care and comfort in accordance with her wishes, assuring her she had not the smallest cause for anxiety, as both his education and his surroundings would be of the first class; and then conducted her to the coach, which drove off in the direction of Tavistock Street with the mysterious stranger.

‘Oh, I forgot,’ exclaimed Willie, as he was trudging by the side of the assistant, who, revolving in his mind the intelligence he had just received, and the pleasure this temporary reprieve would afford Miss Austen as well as Willie and himself, had walked on without speaking a word to the boy.

‘Forgot what?’

‘Why, I forgot to tell the lady what street we lived in. I said you would tell her.’

They had just crossed over to Maiden Lane as this was uttered, and whereupon the assistant stopped short and looked round, first across to the street they had just left, and then on each side the entrance to the lane, as though he expected to see the person alluded to somewhere in the vicinity; in which search the boy’s eyes followed his, though without understanding what he was looking for.

At that moment a coach turned out of Tavistock Street into Southampton Street, in the direction of Covent Garden, and passed close to the side-walk; a veiled head looked out of the window and bowed to Willie, whose eyes, in their wandering, had chanced to alight on the vehicle as it rapidly passed on.

‘There—there she is!’ cried Willie; ‘tell her now,’ at the same time pointing to the coach,—‘that’s her.’

Still more puzzled, the assistant looked after the coach and then at the boy, and said a little sharply, 'What do you mean, boy,—what lady? Where did you see a lady, that wanted to know where you lived?'

'Why, she was in that coach.'

'And if she was in that coach, how could she speak to you?'

'No, she was not in the coach then.'

'Well, where was she? Come along and don't talk foolishly.' Without waiting for any explanation, under the impression that he had been trifled with, he hurried on at a pace that precluded any further conversation, until they arrived at their lodging, where Willie ran clattering up the stairs, leaving the more stately stepping Mr. Grumphy to follow at his leisure. Throwing the door wide open, he rushed into Aunt's arms, exclaiming, out of breath, 'Here I am, Aunt, again.' And, after a good hug, added, 'Did ye think I was lost?'

'O no, I knew you were in safe hands, and that Mr. Grumphy,' to whom she smiled in recognition as he entered and closed the door, 'would take good care of you. But you don't notice Mary Jones, who has been waiting to see you before you went to bed.'

On this Mary came running up, and, catching him in her arms, as much as she could do, went off with him to set him in a chair, where, according to the custom of such young ladies, she began to fondle him, and arrange his frill and other articles of dress, and ply him with all kinds of inquiries as to where he had been, and what he had been doing.

As this was understood to be Willie's last night, and, owing to his detention at the surgeon's, he would necessarily be 'sitting up' later than usual, Miss Austen had prepared a supper, to which Mr. Grumphy and his young friend were invited. The meal was simple but ample; there was little disposition, however, on the part of either to do justice thereto, each being too much absorbed in their own thoughts, the current of which ran all in the same direction, until broken in upon by the less repressible portion of the company.

'Which will you have, Mary,—toast or bread and butter?' said Miss Austen.

'Preserves, if you please, mum,' replied the young lady, her attention having been the last few minutes concentrated on a small gallipot containing currant jelly, home-made, and only produced on such special occasions; at which reply Willie

grinned and held his hand over his mouth, to prevent any unpleasant effect that threatened to result from such untimely ebullition, and whereat Mary turned red. The ice being thus broken, it was not long before they became more communicative.

'Aunt,' said Willie, 'Mary says she's going to wait for me.'

'Oh, Willie! what makes you?'—said the young lady, quite disconcerted at this abrupt disclosure of their private conversation, and assuming an injured look.

'Well, now, didn't you say so?'

'Well, didn't you ask me?'

'What, Mary, are you going to wait for?' asked Mr. Grumphy.

'Oh, I never! Don't mind him, Mr. Grumphy.'

'Ah, now, Mary,' said Willie, 'don't tell stories; I know;—and he shook his finger at her.

'And so do I,' rejoined Aunt. 'Mary's going to wait'—

'To be my wife;—' and Willie laughed out, whilst the young lady stooped to pick up a spoon, that in her confusion she dropped on the floor, a manœuvre that helped to conceal her blushes.

'Don't believe a word of it,' said Mr. Grumphy, unprecedentedly taking part in the little pleasantry.

'Have you to pay to get married, Aunt?'

'It will cost something, Willie,' said Miss Austen, and then laughed at the boy's inquiry.

'Well, I haven't got any money, Mary, but I'll save some.'

'I thought *I* was to wait for you?' said Miss Austen.

At this reminder the lad appeared posed, and then, looking at Mary, said, 'Oh, ah! I forgot. Could you wait a little longer, Mary?'

Whereat Aunt and Mary laughed, and it was Willie's turn to blush.

'But then, if you take her, what will you do for an Aunt?'

said the young lady, not quite prepared to surrender her claim.

'Oh, I know!' said the boy quickly, as the thought occurred, —'I know!'

'What?'

'Why, that lady, she'd be my Aunt, I know.'

'What lady? Why, Willie, have you got another sweetheart?'

said Miss Austen, somewhat amused as well as surprised.

'Umph! you're coming it strong, young man,' chimed in Mr. Grumphy. 'Going to keep a harem like the Grand Turk?'

Whereat the two children laughed and knocked their heads

together, and Willie made his young friend laugh again, when he whispered that 'Mr. Grumphy meant the turkey in the bird shop that gobbled so.' And on recovering from which hilarity the young lady whispered in return, that 'Mr. Surly Burly was an old goose.'

'But who's the other favoured one?' said Miss Austen, her curiosity awakened. 'You never told us who the lady was, or where you met her.'

'The lady I saw at Dr. Scarr's?'

'Did you see a lady there?'

And thereupon all became quite interested in this new disclosure, and subsided into a more sober state.

'Yes, and she slipped this into my pocket.' Saying which he pulled out the identical ring that had elicited his admiration whilst on her finger. The boy looked perplexed, not less so than the rest, and, recovering his astonishment, whilst he gave the ring to Aunt, who asked to look at it, began searching his pocket again, and then the other, from which, pulling out a sovereign, he exclaimed,—

'O no, this is what she gave me, and put in my pocket;' and, handing it over for inspection, said, 'I wonder how that came there!' alluding to the ring, on the inside of which Miss Austen was endeavouring to make out the initials.

In answer to their further inquiries, he stated he had seen and admired the jewel on her hand, and therefore concluded it must have also been deposited in his pocket by the lady. The ciphers, which seemed a combination of letters, were, however, too much flourished to be made out; and all that could be surmised was that it must be the initials of the lady's name, and which enhanced its value much beyond the intrinsic worth of the brilliant, or the gold in which it was set, and of which, therefore, great care was to be taken.

On the conclusion of the examination of the ring and the coin, both of which Miss Austen was to see to the due care of, the conversation relative to this late acquaintance of the boy's was renewed by Mary impatiently asking, two or three times before she obtained an answer, 'Where was the lady? and what was she like? and where did she go?' and other such questionings, without affording time for a separate reply to each.

'In the dark room that we went into; and she cried so, I think the Doctor must have been cross with her before I got there.'

At this revelation Aunty and Mr. Grumphy looked at each other with increased surprise; and, the supper being concluded, they withdrew their chairs from the table. Calling the boy to her side, Miss Austen resumed the interrogation, whilst Mary stood at a little distance facing them, with a sly, half-offended look, that seemed to say, 'Now you're going to be found out, my boy.'

'And the lady cried?' said Miss Austen, smoothing his hair.

'Yes; and she did that too,' alluding to this action of Aunty.

'Was she a little lady?' said Mary, with a meaning in her question more than mere curiosity,—'littler than me?'

'Oh, get out!—littler than you! Of course she was five times as big,' said Willie, stretching his arms as high as he could reach, and directing his eyes to a greater altitude.

'Then she was a she-dragon!' chimed in Mr. Grumphy.

'No, she wasn't; she was a nice lady. Didn't she give me that money? And she cuddled and kissed me too.'

'Oh, oh!' said Mary, with a reproachful look, as she raised her finger in rebuke;—'kissed you! And you kissed her, I s'pose?'

'Well, there was no harm in that,—was there, Aunty?'

'No, dear. You mean that the lady was as tall as I am?'

'Yes, to be sure.'

He looked at Mary as though this information was his vindication; but whether this quieted Mary's rising jealousy or not, Aunty and Mr. Grumphy were too much interested to let the matter rest without making some further effort to solve the mystery.

'But you did not tell us what she was like,' said Miss Austen.

'Yes; I said she was like a lady, and she called me "Willie dear," and cuddled me, and—and'—

'You cuddled her, I know,' said Mary, a little of the expiring jealousy rekindling.

'Of course; and so would you. And don't I cuddle Aunt and you?'

'Don't interrupt, Mary dear,' said Miss Austen. 'But tell me, Willie, did she say anything to you?'

'She said she loved me, and wanted me to love her best; but I told her I couldn't, because I loved you best.'

Mary looked up as much as to say, 'and me.'

'And what then?' said Miss Austen.

'Oh, nothing much. I think that was all; only I said I

would ask Mr. Grumphy to tell her where we lived, and I forgot.'

'But you didn't say what she was like,' chimed in Mary, unable to restrain her curiosity.

'How could I tell? The room was too dark; and she had a cloak on and a veil, but she had such beautiful curls,—longer than yours, Aunt; and he reached up his hands and began stretching the short ringlets on Aunt's forehead;—'and such nice soft cheeks, and eyes like—like mine, I think;' and he opened his lids wide at Mary, and laughed, but in which Mary declined joining.

As the boy appeared unable to afford any further clue, a consultation ensued, at the close of which some thoughts thereby suggested caused a renewal of the examination, until, teased with their questions, he added one more piece of information that for the moment increased their perplexity.

'How can I tell who she was?' Then he recollected, and said, 'Wasn't it Mrs. Scarr?'

'Mrs. Scarr!' exclaimed Miss Austen and Mr. Grumphy together; and then the latter added, 'What would Mrs. Scarr want with you? She's not that kind of a woman,—she hates children, and everything else, but cats.'

'O my!' exclaimed Mary, 'what a queer woman!' And Willie proposed to buy the tortoiseshell tabby in the bird shop to send her.

'What made you think it was Mrs. Scarr?' said the assistant.

'Because Dr. Scarr called her so.'

The mystery was increasing. Miss Austen and Mr. Grumphy looked at each other in expectation of the expression of some opinion, but as neither spoke, a pause ensued, interrupted only by an occasional ejaculation on the part of the latter, indicating that he was arguing the matter to himself. 'Mrs. Scarr! fudge! she fond of children! yes, as a weasel of a rat! What 'ud she slobber over him for? Very likely!'

Just then another idea occurred to the more logical mind of Miss Austen, who, though not of an inquisitive disposition,—at least in matters with which she had no particular concern,—had become too anxious, especially at this crisis in his history, for the boy's welfare not to be conscious that this mysterious interview had some special bearing on his future, and further, that the stranger stood in a near relationship to the child; and yet how could Mrs. Scarr stand in any such connection? It was therefore in order, if possible, to elicit some information that, treasured

up, might be hereafter of benefit to the boy, that she followed up the inquiries, and said,—

‘Did you ever see her before, Willie?’

‘See who, Aunt?’ said Willie, who had been hopping around Mary, endeavouring to bring matters between himself and that young lady back to an amicable relationship.

‘The lady about whom you have been telling us. Did you ever see her anywhere? Now, think;’ and she drew him to her side, as, in obedience to her request, his thoughts went back, and during which Mary silently approached, and watched the working of his face, ready to proffer her assistance if required.

Although Miss Austen had put this question to him, she could not help thinking it was a useless one; for such an event could scarcely have occurred without coming to her knowledge at the time, and yet there was an impression on her mind that it had occurred.

The boy looked at Auntie and then at Mary, whose eyes were opened to their full extent, and into which he gazed as though expecting to read his answer therein; and now the same indistinct vision that came over him whilst in the surgery floated again before him, and he replied slowly, ‘I think—I—did,—you and I, Mary.’ Mary drew nearer.

Without permitting Miss Austen time to follow up her interrogations, Mr. Grumphy, who had been walking up and down the room pursuing his own train of thought, stopped short, and, looking down upon the boy, demanded with a frown ‘if she was in that coach that passed them between Tavistock Street and Maiden Lane,’ to which the boy, having assented more than once in response to his repeated question, he exclaimed, ‘Then it could not be Mrs. Scarr;’ and, flapping his side, continued his promenade, quite satisfied he had settled that point.

Resuming her last line of thought, Miss Austen continued, ‘Can’t you recall where you saw her before?’

‘Oh, Auntie, what makes you bother so?’

‘Because, my dear, it’s for your good. So just try and remember where you think you saw any one like her before.’

‘Was it Mrs. Burns?’ said Mary, putting her face close to his, and endeavouring to assist his memory.

‘Mrs. Burns! What a question! Wouldn’t I know Mrs. Burns? She wasn’t a washerwoman;’ and thereupon both joined in a hearty laugh.

‘Well, you said it was somebody I had seen, didn’t you?’ and

then she knelt down and pulled his socks up, and as she did so remarked, 'Why, you spilt some water or your tea or something else on your pinafore.'

'Oh, I know now, that was just it,' exclaimed the boy, and his face brightened. As he uttered these words, Mr Grumphy halted and faced round, whilst Miss Austen regarded the boy with an encouraging look, and Mary jumped up and took him by the hand, and could scarcely be restrained by Auntie from putting various refreshers in the shape of numerous and most unlikely questions.

'Don't you mind,' addressing Mary, 'one day, ever so long ago, when you took me to the Green Park, I nearly fell in, and'—

'O yes, I know,' interrupted Mary, unable to await his explanation. 'Yes, you went too near the edge of the water, and I had to take off your shoes and socks and dry them, and wipe your feet with your pinafore.'

'Yes; and you know, as we sat on the grass'—

'Yes, a lady came and sat down by our side, that had been following us, and asked your name, and seemed so fond of you.'

'Yes; and walked a long way with us, and asked all manner of questions, and told you to take care of me, and gave me a silver shilling'—

'No, a crown,' said Mary; 'and we told you, Miss Austen, —don't you remember?'

'Was that her? and that you told me you saw since in Leicester Square?' Willie nodded his head.

'That was the same lady?' said Mr. Grumphy.

'I think so.'

The problem was not solved, and this was all that could be learned; and whilst the two elders continued silently to work out their imaginings to some plausible, and probably the same, conclusion, the two children were soon engaged at the window, to which they retired, in a conversation in which the young lady took as usual the greater share, and in which, forgetting her little jealous asides, they were mutually endeavouring to excel each other in their efforts to please, until, in the exuberance of her gushing nature, Mary threw her arms around Willie's neck and gave him a hearty smack, the report of which attracted the attention of Mr. Grumphy and Miss Austen; perceiving which, Mary looked somewhat abashed, whilst Willie, half blushing, said, 'Oh, oh, Mary!' looking at Miss Austen the while.

'Well, I'm sure that's no harm,' said the little maid, looking in the same direction.

'Didn't you say so, now, a little while ago?'

'Oh, that was another thing; that wasn't the same thing "at all."'

'O yes, now, it's all the same. Isn't it, Mr. Grumphy?' seeing that gentleman looking towards them, attracted by the controversy.

'What's all the same?' said the assistant.

'Why, Mary'—whereat Mary, who presumably was beginning to entertain an idea that after all it might not be so very different, ran and held her hand over his mouth.

'Yes, I will,' said Willie, struggling, and getting a word out here and there. 'She—she—kissed me.'

'There now, I won't speak to you,' said Mary, colouring up and pouting.

'Well, you might do worse,' said Mr. Grumphy. 'Only don't do it often,—it's dangerous;' whereupon the two children regarded him with some curiosity, wondering where the danger was; but as he did not vouchsafe any further comment or explanation, Mary shook her head at Willie, examined her finger, and, applying it to her mouth, retired again to the window, followed, however, the next minute by Willie, but whose approach was quickly resented.

'No, I won't,—I won't, now; you needn't come,—I won't speak;' and she went over to the other window, but to which, as he followed her, she leaned her two elbows on the sill, and with her hands covered her ears, thereby intimating she was beyond hearing anything in extenuation of his betrayal. But as he persisted in looking through her arms into her face, and plying her with remarks, she held her hands over her eyes and ears, and thereupon the young gallant stepped softly back for a chair, and, placing it behind her, stood thereon, and, suddenly drawing back her head, kissed her nose. 'There, there now!' said Mary triumphantly, 'Now, who kisses? I have you now.'

'Well, that's nothing,—that's right; boys always kiss the girls,—don't they?'

'Then why may not the girls kiss the boys, I'd like to know?' asks Mary.

'Because'—

'Because what?'

'Because they mustn't.'

'I'm sure that's no reason,' said Mary.

'Children,' interposed Miss Austen, 'it's time Willie was in bed; he ought to have been *asleep* by this time, as he has to rise early to-morrow.'

Mr. Grumphy only now remembered that he had not communicated the surgeon's intimation that the boy's departure was delayed for a few days; upon learning which a clapping of hands on the part of Mary and Willie ensued, and mutual congratulations, in which Mary forgot herself once more,—however, this time with impunity; whilst Miss Austen playfully remarked 'that Mr. Grumphy was a knowing man not to tell them before supper, for fear it might save the jelly;' at which even Mr. Grumphy condescended to smile, and the children once more clapped their hands and danced around the room.

As the hour was late, the little company broke up. Mr. Grumphy retired, feeling somewhat different, if not the better, for unbending himself in so unusual a manner. And all rejoiced that a few days of grace were yet before them ere the trying ordeal was to take place.

CHAPTER IX.

FACTS AND FICTIONS.

IN order to maintain the reputation for punctuality and despatch, noted on the bills and cards of the fast-sailing smacks and other craft sailing from Green's Wharf, Wapping, the *Wasp*, Speed, master, loading for Stockton-on-Tees, was detained a few days subsequent to the time named for her departure. In this particular, however, the owners of the said craft were by no means singular, and were only following the precedent of more pretentious firms, a mode of procedure apparently forming an essential feature in the art of ship-brokering, since all vessels 'up' for ports beyond the sea, or elsewhere, were, before steam-vessels superseded their passenger traffic, usually advertised to be *positively* despatched on a certain date, considerably in advance of the time intended,—thereby very successfully keeping the intended passenger on the alert, and in a proper degree of agitation, not unfrequently occasioning him to take a hurried leave of friends, and to drive post-haste to the port of embarkation, with barely time left to go on board. On arrival, confidentially informed—confidentially, lest the intelligence should reach some others equally interested—that the punctual ship would not sail till the morrow; but which to-morrow, he finds out to his *cost*, extended to every to-morrow embraced in the next six weeks.

In the interim of the days to elapse before the sailing of the *Wasp*, in which Willie's passage was booked, we shall just step aside to accompany the reader to the Poultry in the City, or rather to Bucklersbury, which, inclining from Cheapside, runs behind the portion of the street bearing the former name; and, after descending a short distance, turn on the right-hand side into Barge Yard, a narrow, quiet street or court, having no outlet at the other end, inhabited principally by merchants doing

business with every clime, some of whom were men of wealth. The end building, entered through an archway, was principally occupied by a wholesale stationer, subsequently a celebrated Lord Mayor of the city. About two-thirds of the distance up this roadway, we turn into an open door, and ascend a steep staircase, until we come to the first landing, where, by a name painted on the door, also indicated on the posts below, we find ourselves at Mr. Hiram Hawkes' place of business.

On entering the office, by which term the first room, appropriated to the use of Mr. Hawkes' clerk, was designated, you could not fail to be impressed with the large amount of business that must be transacted in that very small space. On shelves running along the opposite side were deposited boxes of various shapes and sizes, each having either some large painted letters or paper labels pasted thereon, descriptive of their contents,—the latter, however, mostly too dirty and too illegible to make out. Against the wall, opposite the shelves, and behind the door, stood a large, shaky press, the doors wide open, on the upper shelves of which were deposited various printed blank legal forms, their nature being designated by a strip of paper stuck into each set; the other and lower portion containing a mass of loose papers and parchments, thrown in pell-mell, and usually calling for an extra amount of patience when any one in particular was required. A further supply of boxes was scattered promiscuously around the room, some with the lids off, out of which bundles of papers, folded up and tied with red tape, had been taken in the search for others, and left on the floor. A large old-fashioned mahogany desk, very black, and coated with accumulations of grease and dirt, stood at a short distance from the window, along the outside whereof, in front of the clerk, were dirty tied-up bundles, apparently related to those on the ground; whilst on the sloping portion were several sheets of loose papers, written and printed, interspersed with rulers, ink-stand, pounce-box, lead weights, and other paraphernalia requisite to aid in the production of the important legal missives and documents concocted in that arcanum, the begrimed windows of which somewhat aided in imparting a deeper sense of the mysterious art required in their production, and which windows were further shaded by a couple of half-drawn decayed blinds, whose only use, beyond aiding the above effect, might be to further help the impression of a very old, and consequently a very respectable, firm.

But not the least important portion of the contents of the room, when within it, and which, when not sent out of it by the principal, was usually from nine till six, was the more modern figure seated on the brown-cushioned stool behind that extensive desk. Occasionally his head reclined on his arm, as it reposed on the said desk, whilst his fingers were employed in engrossing, in German text, the words commencing the document on which he was engaged, transcribing from another paper by his side, which document, being of parchment, necessitated the frequent use of the pounce-box to negative its greasy texture, as the well-whitened coat-sleeve of the said figure abundantly testified. Then he would draw back and take a prolonged survey of the last-formed letter, decide upon one or two improvements, and, having effected the same, make another inspection, and, with a nod of approval, commence the next letter, at the conclusion of which the same examination and amendment took place, until, finally, on completion of the whole word, he threw his pen and penknife on to the desk (the penknife, during copying, being always held between the two first fingers and thumb of the left hand, to hold down the material on which writing), tilted the stool on its two hind legs, and, leaning the back of his head against the wall, his two thumbs thrust into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, his thoughts took a discursive flight.

Mr. Octavius Skeggs, the notability thus introduced, was a gentleman of about five or six-and-twenty, of average stature; his hair inclined more than slightly to a brown shade,—we should say red, were it not that by some process known to himself, he had latterly contrived to impart this darker hue, and of course the whiskers followed suite; his complexion was of the same florid tint, inclining a little to sallow, possibly the result of his sedentary occupation; dark eyes, with a jocular expression; his face oblong, the most prominent feature on which was, of course, his nose, but somewhat more elongated and projecting than noses in general, always announcing the owner's proximity by appearing first round a corner or a door-post; his figure was slight and agile; and, though not by any means laying claim to be styled good-looking, his cheery manner, coupled with a not unmusical voice, did very much to offset the less agreeable lineaments of his person.

In dress Mr. Skeggs affected tightly-strapped trousers, the vogue in those days with any young gentleman of *ton*, which in Octavius' case was an advantage, inasmuch as it compelled a

nearer approach of that portion of his dress to his ankle-boots than otherwise could have been ensured, at the same time having the drawback of compelling the legs they encased to maintain two nearly straight lines, scarcely allowing any deflection from the knees except at the peril of a burst; a blue faded tail-coat adorned the upper man,—that is, when on the streets, for in the office this was always exchanged for an older one, and carefully folded and deposited in one end of his desk; his double-breasted waistcoat, tightly buttoned to his throat, precluded any exhibition of a shirt, the only allusion to which was found in the narrow rim of collar, that scarcely peeped above a well-worn satin stock, buckled behind his long neck.

Mr. Skeggs' temperament partook of his corporeal tint, being of a sanguine nature,—not so readily changed as his hair, but which nevertheless would in all probability become toned down by a more infallible process, time and experience,—invaluable ingredients towards effecting such result. This element often occasioned him to raise some very splendid edifices, which he should eventually be destined to inhabit with some fair enchantress, and an extra assortment of footmen, servants, horses, carriages, and innumerable other indispensables,—so numerous, that, as they were at times difficult to recall, he intended some day to make a list of them. Mr. Skeggs had indulged in this line to such an extent, that it became next door to a reality, and produced a very happy effect, contributing towards a degree of contentment the very reverse of what might have been expected from such ambitious imaginings, the more remarkable, as his means were at present very limited, being in the enjoyment of fifteen shillings and sixpence weekly, with the promise, long held out, of the addition of the odd sixpence on the occurrence of some indefinite event or period, the non-fulfilment of which, thus far, might naturally be supposed to have cast a doubt on Mr. Skeggs' mind as to his other prospects, and whether his castle-building might not also remain unfulfilled, or be postponed, in parlance familiar to his legal mind, 'sine die,' but it did not do so, and which speaks so well for that gentleman, that it is only justice to him to record it.

Mr. Skeggs had remained in his recumbent position some time, soaring as usual, until he reached the highest pinnacle of his castle, on which he had been in the habit of reposing so often, that he could look down therefrom without becoming at all dizzy, when a noise in the inner room reminded him that the governor, *alias* Mr. Hiram Hawkes, was probably about making

his appearance in the office, and under which impression Mr. Skeggs instantly descended from his elevated perch,—testified to by the fore legs of his stool coming into position,—and was again engrossing away at the parchment with his wonted celerity and abstraction from all extraneous objects. However, as it proved a false alarm, Mr. Skeggs once more slackened his speed, and, after listening a minute and hearing no further signs, resumed his former position and meditations, to which, leaving him for a second or two, we will step into the next room, the door of which is lettered ‘private.’

Mr. Hawkes, whose occasional movements during the last hour had imparted their influence to the next room, was seated at his table, very busily engaged consulting Chitty and some other authorities in the well-thumbed volumes before him, whilst drawing out a ‘declaration,’ intended to follow a writ termed a ‘latitat,’ which had been issued in a suit brought by one Figgins, the attorney’s client, against a Mrs. Sarah Bodkins, for debt due the said Figgins for sundries supplied to that lady for marine purposes.

Engaged in drawing up this document, which when completed would afford another instance of the literary attainments of Mr. Hawkes in the composition of pleasant little bits of fiction, the morning had advanced without any interruption, until, just at the conclusion thereof to his entire satisfaction, and when he was about calling Mr. Skeggs into his presence, with the intent of requesting a fair copy thereof to be made, that gentleman knocked, and, opening the door, announced Captain Lejette; whereupon a tall, fashionably-dressed, middle-aged man of easy carriage was ushered into the room. At the bottom of the yard, in the Bury, he had left a stylish cab, with a very showy horse in patent leather harness, attended by a ‘tiger’ in green livery, with gilt crested buttons, white corduroy breeches, and yellow-topped boots, the cockade in his hat intimating that his master belonged to ‘the service.’

‘Whew, but you’re warm here! Ah, Hawkes, how d’e do, ole feller? Glad see you—hard at it as usual—plucking some poor devil of a pigeon, eh? Ha! ha! you’re the boy!’ And, seizing the proffered hand as the attorney rose to offer a seat, he commenced shaking it with warm protestations of gratification at having this unexpected pleasure, and which, as he was there by appointment, must have been very gratifying and unexpected. As he deposited his hat and gloves on the table, the latter occasioning some

exertion to withdraw from his hands, with his finger and thumb he drew a white silk handkerchief from an outer breast pocket of his coat, and affected to dust his head and whiskers therewith, and then replaced it with artistic reference to display, at the conclusion whereof he carefully deposited himself in the chair handed by the attorney, crossed his legs in as easy a manner as his strapped trousers would permit, and continued his bantering.

'Be merciful, Hawkes,—be merciful, ole feller ; remember the widow and fatherless.' This last was uttered with a mock solemnity, and drew a faint approving smile from the worthy man addressed, it being so much in harmony with his own sentiments.

'Ah, Captain, I fear we too often forget them,' he sighed ; but lest it might occur to his visitor that he classed himself amongst the forgetful *we*, he added, 'They are ever near my heart ;' and he looked up at the opposite corner of the ceiling.

'Specially the widows,—eh, Hawkes?' He accompanied this with a knowing wink, but, owing to the direction in which the attorney was looking, it was not observed by him ; seeing which, he said in a sympathetic tone, 'Don't take them so much to heart, Hawkes,—it's too much for you, ole fellow ; and, 'sides, Mrs. Hawkes might object.' The attorney sighed, and, casting his eyes on the table, looked vacantly thereon until they fell upon a bill of costs, which appeared to have the effect of bringing his thoughts to a more terrene state ; perceiving which, the Captain addressed him on the more interesting occasion of his visit.

'Busy, Hawkes?—had time to look into our little matter, eh?'

The attorney rose, and gathered up the papers upon which he had been engaged on the arrival of his friend, and laid them aside, then reached to the opposite end of the table, and selected from a row of papers, each tied together with red tape, and variously endorsed, a bundle thicker than the rest, and docketed '*In re* Trelawney.' Reseating himself, he turned up the top ends of the folded papers until he came to the one he was in search of, and, withdrawing it from the rest, he opened it, and commenced running over page after page, reading here and there a few words, and then turned back a few sheets, until he finally came to a clause that arrested his attention more particularly ; during a muttered perusal thereof, he ever and anon raised his eyes to the ceiling, on each occasion apparently obtaining some assistance, as his return to a re-perusal of the document was accompanied by a smile and approving 'Yes, yes,' which occa-

sioned the Captain to follow his upturned look to the same point, but as he was unable to detect anything but a very black coating of smoke, he broke in upon the attorney's meditations by exclaiming,—

'Well, ole fellow, what's to pay?' and stretched himself back in his chair, as he threw out his legs.

At the mention of the word pay, Mr. Hawkes was instinctively aroused, and involuntarily put his hand into his breeches pocket.

'Anything there?—anything very hard to get at?' said his client, referring of course to the document, and not to the pocket.

'Very, very abstruse; requiring great legal acumen and much tact to get over.'

'Then, Hawkes, you're the boy to do it. I'd like to see the gap you wouldn't drive a coach and six through. Don't stop reconnoitring; but do as I used to advise our general, whilst the rest were counselling regular approaches. "Carry it," said I, "by a *coup de main*;" and we did carry it.'

Whether this had reference to any holiday review, or mess dinner campaign, or other equally glorious occasion for the display of Captain Lejette's military genius, that gentleman omitted to state; but it will be apparent that he was not one of that accomplished type of soldiers, who, as stated by a distinguished writer, can lay aside his sword without even reminding you that he ever wore one.

'You see, Captain,' replied the attorney, flattered at the estimation in which his abilities were held, 'by the covenants and stipulations hereinbefore mentioned'—

'Stop, ole fellow. Beg pardon; but when did you mention them before?'

'They are mentioned in the former part of the conveyance of which this is the draft, the original being deposited at my banker's with other valuable papers; but to resume, the property was conveyed to you in trust, to be applied in the manner therein mentioned.'

'That's an old tale, Hawkes; we've advanced far beyond that. You've not retreated, I hope? 'Pon honour, we're a mile ahead. Haven't you taken the next "work" yet?'

'I'm of opinion there will be some trouble in proceeding further,' replied the cautious attorney, with a grave look.

'Not a bit, Hawkes,—not a bit,' said the military man, who was too accustomed to the attorney's newly-discovered obstacles to

lay much stress thereon ; and by way of assisting him over, was in the habit of encouraging him by a modicum of flattery. 'You're not the man to stand gaping at this side the fence when you ought to be on the other ; so, as I used to say to our boys, "Up, Guards, and at 'em!"' and as he appropriated this language of a *greater* captain, uttered on a memorable occasion, he leaped up and slapped Mr. Hawkes on the back, by way of imparting something of his own ardour to that gentleman's composition.

'Really, Captain Lejette,' said the attorney remonstratingly, 'I am most anxious to do, as every *honest* lawyer is bound to do, the best for my client's interest ; but conscience, sir,—conscience, that never slumbers in this breast,'—and he laid his hand thereon, —'and whose voice I ever listen to, speaks with its monitory tenderness.'

'Give him his discharge, Hawkes,—drum him out. You'll never make anything of him ; he'll play you false just when he's least expected. Could never make anything of him in our corps. But, 'pon honour, my dear fellow, there's no time to parley now ; I'm terribly hard up, and greatly in want of supplies. You know Jairus is ready to advance the money on mortgage till we sell ; so don't flinch. Now, don't shake your occiput and look so awfully solemn ; you'll give me a fit of the blues, and I might repent, and if I did, I'd be sure to repent again.'

'Repent, Captain Lejette ! If I could only lead you to repentance !'

'Too late, Hawkes,—too late ; can't go back to take these outworks ;—lose too much time and too much pay. 'Sides, I'm afraid we'd lose ourselves. The old boy, or, as you rightly call him, the old enemy's got us too far in the van to retreat now ;—eh, ole fellow ? Come, that's good of you to cry *peccavi* now ;' and thereupon he administered another slap on the attorney's back by way of further pacifying conscience.

'Captain Lejette,' said the attorney, looking round with a shiver, startled at that gentleman's view of the situation, 'you are under a mistake,—an egregious mistake ; it is my aim, and hitherto my ambition, to preserve a conscience void of offence.'

'Well, now, listen ! if that is not capital ! Then I'm terribly afraid, Hawkes, you've missed the mark, and expended your ammunition for nothing ;—you've been outmanœuvred.'

'Captain Lejette, I must protest ! you don't understand me,'

exclaimed the attorney with some energy. 'Your fears and notions arise from not properly appreciating our relative positions, as well as not discerning my duty as a lawyer apart from my higher one as a Christian.'

'Oh! ah! yes, yes; just so, Hawkes, just so; you're always O.K. I'm free to confess I'm rather dense there. Well, then, we'll make the distinction now, ole fellow, and just for the nonce let Hawkes the pious go to the—the—well, he can go where he likes for the next half hour, whilst the lawyer and I do up the business on hand;' and hereupon the military man drew his chair closer, and assumed the air of one about entering in earnest into his business.

'Well, sir, as *your* professional adviser, in which capacity I beg you to perfectly understand I am now, as always heretofore, acting in this matter, I can but repeat my advice that we must not precipitate matters, but proceed with due caution. By this deed, under which alone you are empowered to act, and from which I will proceed to read extracts'—

'For heaven's sake, spare me, Hawkes!'

'Captain Lejette!' exclaimed the pious attorney, as he looked at him solemnly, and then glanced up at the ceiling, shaking his head the while, 'I must entreat you to spare me, and not utter such words in my presence.'

'What words?'

'I could not repeat them, sir.'

'Oh! ah! I see you don't like to be reminded of that place. But I say, Hawkes, that's not keeping faith. Didn't we agree just now that it was only the lawyer we were to do with at present? Come, that's devilish good!'

The attorney once more shivered, raised his hands with his eyes, then lowered them and sighed. It's difficult to separate a good man from himself.

'Ah, Hawkes, I'm afraid I'm incorrigible. But you made the distinction, recollect; so let's keep to it. So now, once more, what do you advise?'

'You were authorized to expend the money to accrue from the sale of the 3 per cents.'

'And we've done so, most *conscientiously*. You managed that splendidly, Hawkes. But we want more, and you must raise it on that old tumble-down property at Barbican.'

'But Dr. Scarr's wishes must be consulted in the matter.'

'He's one with us, and wants his share as much as I do.'

‘In the meantime, remember your ward. The boy will require funds for his further schooling and apprenticeship.’

‘We’ll provide. Sell the property. There’s other and more valuable in reserve.’

‘A question or two may arise, and amongst others there might be some trouble with one of the witnesses,—the other, fortunately, being *non est inventus*.’

‘None whatever,—couldn’t possibly.’

‘Figgins!’ said the lawyer impressively.

‘Figgins! What, the old warehouseman,—is he alive? Oh, he be hanged! What does that old ignoramus know?’

‘Too much, should he be got hold of by any interested party.’

‘Ah! how so?’ said the Captain, for the moment laying aside his flippant style,—“too much?” How? what can he know?’ Then rallying, exclaimed, ‘Phew! you’d soon settle him; he’d be a cuter man than Figgins, or twenty Figginses together, that Hawkes would not give his quietus to.’

Mr. Hawkes smiled, and replied, ‘But that difficulty overcome, there is another to which I have before referred, and to meet which will require deliberation and tact, and will, I fear, be hazardous.’

‘Don’t hesitate, my dear fellow; we’ve gone too far to coquet with trifles.’

‘We, Captain Lejette! How often am I to remind you to draw the line, and distinguish between your positions as principals, and mine acting entirely as your professional adviser, following your directions most disinterestedly.’

‘Decidedly so,—most disinterestedly!—considering you’re to come in for your share of the spoils.’

‘Spoils, sir!—my legal dues.’

‘Well, we’ll not quarrel about the name,—call it what you will. “A rose with any other name,”—eh, ole fellow? And to give the devil his due,—Beg pardon,’ seeing the attorney was preparing a remonstrance at the mention of so objectionable a personage. ‘I see you don’t understand army phraseology any more than I do legal.’ Saying this, he drew out his watch and jumped to his feet, exclaiming, ‘Hity-tity, it’s time I was at the Mall. Ta-ta, Hawkes. You’ll settle the matter *toute suite*.’

‘Then,’ said the attorney as they rose, ‘it is both yours and the Doctor’s wish that such alterations be made as will enable you to give a lien on or sell the premises.’

‘Precisely; I see you quite understand *our* instructions,’ said

the Captain, with an affected laugh. Bye-bye—solon ;' and he strode out of the office without deigning to notice Mr. Skeggs, who, as usual, was too absorbed in his copying to afford time to notice him. Arrived at the foot of the yard, he vaulted into his cab, and, seizing the whip and reins, contrived to put his Bucephalus through a few prancing attitudes, to the admiration of the foot-passengers, who rushed into the doorways for safety whilst they watched his proceedings ; as well as to the jeopardy of the little tiger, who remained by the head until the start, and then kept up a pursuit of the vehicle until he succeeded in mounting behind, where he held on by the dangling hand-ropes.

'You'll make a note of that in the day-book, Mr. Skeggs,' said the attorney, as he approached the desk.

'*In re* Trelawney. Received instructions from trustees to arrange and prepare existing and necessary papers, deeds, and documents, to enable them to mortgage or otherwise dispose of the property called "The Old Brewery." Mr. Skeggs rapidly took down the words as dictated, and then inquired if he'd carry out six and eightpence to the money column. The attorney thought a moment, and then said it was too little,—he'd fill in the amount himself.

'Mr. Figgins, sir,' said the clerk, as the attorney was retiring to his room without seeing that person, who, seated on a box on the other side of the desk, rose as Skeggs mentioned his name.

'Oh, Figgins, is that you ? I did not see you. Go into my room.' Mr. Hawkes showed him to a seat, returned, closing the door after him, and approached his clerk with an uneasy look, and whispered, 'Has Mr. Figgins been waiting long ?'

'Just after Mr. Lejette—Captain Lejette, I mean—came in.'

'So long as that ? Did he hear anything ?'

Mr. Skeggs looked at Mr. Hawkes to ascertain that he properly understood the question, and thereupon to shape the answer accordingly ; but as he was unable to learn his meaning from the attorney's manner, he replied at hazard, 'Yes, sir.'

'Eh !' exclaimed Mr. Hawkes, with some alarm.

'No, sir,' quickly ejaculated Mr. Skeggs, finding he had made a mistake, and hoping to recall it in time.

'He did not hear anything, Mr. Skeggs ?'

Mr. Skeggs was puzzled ; and now, conceiving he ought to have adhered to the affirmative, exclaimed, 'O yes,—I forgot.'

Mr. Hawkes looked disappointed. 'Why don't you answer correctly, and not hum and ha so ? What did he hear ?'

Now, considering that Mr. Skeggs had been holding a very desultory conversation with Mr. Figgins, and that the latter was not deaf, there were many things that he must have heard, but what one in particular Mr. Skeggs should say he had heard was the question,—the more so as they had relation to very unprofessional topics.

‘Why don’t you answer me, Mr. Skeggs?—what did he hear? I insist upon you informing me instantly what Mr. Figgins heard.’

‘Heard, sir? Well, he heard’—Mr. Skeggs was becoming confused. ‘What! Do you mean what you said?’ The attorney nodded. ‘Well, he heard you.’

‘Ah, I thought so; and that’s how you listen, and let others listen, to my conversation with my clients,—conversations that should be sacred and unrevealed to mortal ear;—“That which is whispered in the closet shall be”’—Mr. Hawkes stopped; the quotation had an ominous conclusion, and his zeal was betraying him. ‘What did he hear me say, sir?—I ask and insist on knowing.’

‘He heard you say, sir,’ said the agitated clerk, “Come”—no—“Go into my room, Mr. Figgins.”’ Mr. Skeggs looked aghast at the attorney.

‘And what more?—No prevarication.’

‘Nothing, sir.’

‘Did he not hear me talking in the next room to Captain Lejette?’

‘No, sir.’

‘What was he doing, then, all that time?’

‘Talking to me, sir.’ A happy thought occurred to Mr. Skeggs: ‘I kept him talking, sir.’

‘Then I beg, another time, you attend to your work and not spend your time in gossiping.’

Having said which he retired to his room, leaving Mr. Skeggs considerably perplexed, and if not the wiser, at least, on his return to his normal state, firmly resolving to be up to him the next time.

‘Well, Mr. Figgins,’ said the attorney in a bland tone, ‘sorry to keep you, and sorry to hear you have been waiting so long; but really I scarcely know how to get through the business daily increasing on my hands.’

Now, considering the great respect for truth professed by Mr. Hawkes, this assertion can only be reconciled on the hypothesis that, in accordance with the distinction laid down in his con-

sultation with Captain Lejette, he was now speaking professionally,—for the business of the firm was barely sufficient to afford employment for a clerk, who, in fact, did duty in the dual capacity of clerk and messenger.

'We are getting on with your case, Mr. Figgins; the writ has been issued, and served by my clerk. We had great difficulty in finding the defendant, who was always dodging and hiding out of the way, but we nabbed her at last;' and hereupon Mr. Hawkes rubbed his hands together, and smiled complacently at Mr. Figgins; but as that gentleman was not posted in legal terms, he was at a loss to comprehend the allusion, and inquired, with some stammering in getting hold of the word, what the 'deaf ant' was that was always hiding.

'Defendant? Oh! that's Bodkins—Mrs. Bodkins,—she's the defendant. That's what we style her in law; and you are the plaintiff.'

'Are I? And what makes ye call us them names?' said Mr. Figgins, not quite inclined to submit to such freedom.

'Oh, my good man, those are the legal terms whereby we define the parties to an action or suit. He who brings the action is plaintiff, and he who resists defendant. You are the plaintiff, Bodkins the defendant.'

'Are I—is we?' ejaculated Mr. Figgins, astounded at this piece of forensic instruction, but failing to comprehend the right to any such legal re-baptism. 'And are we allers to be called by them queer names—what d'ye call 'em?—plain—plain tiffin Figgins and deaf Bodkins?' These last words were uttered slowly and more to himself, by way of ascertaining whether he had got them correctly before pronouncing them aloud, and which henceforth was the shape into which the terms became concreted within Mr. Figgins' small brain, very retentive of first impressions. 'Mr. 'Awkes,' said he, shaking his head, 'I'm afraid Mrs. Figgins will object.'

'O no,' responded Mr. Hawkes; 'only in this particular case. But'—seeing the impression made, and by way of confirming it—'I want you to listen, that you may tell me if there's any mistake with respect to your claim in the premises.'

'Beg pardon, sir; but I don't claim hanything on the premises. It's the money as she's a howing for them things as she bought and carried off the premises.'

'Yes, yes, I understand. Now, listen.' Whereupon Mr. Hawkes proceeded to read the various counts in the declaration, and

which went on to describe some most startling facts as causes of action, namely, 'that the said defendant by force and arms had entered upon the premises, assaulted, beaten, and otherwise shamefully and most villanously damaged, ill-used, and maltreated the aforesaid plaintiff, to the danger of the peace and lives, not only of the aforesaid, but of all His Majesty's liege subjects; thereby evidencing that one of the greatest criminals and most dangerous characters in His Majesty's dominions had, by virtue of the said writ, so fortunately issued by one Tenterden, been seized and brought under the pale of the Court of King's Bench, and was there and then to answer for such conduct before the said Tenterden, who, on reference to the first words of the said writ, appeared to be not only Lord Chief Justice of that Court, but a well-beloved cousin of the sovereign's. All of which, however, translated for the understanding of the intelligent reader, meant that the said Sarah Bodkins was in debt to Mr. Figgins in the sum of twenty-six pounds seven shillings and two pence, for certain articles supplied, but all of which the said Sarah Bodkins would, as soon as she pleaded, deny *in toto*, averring that she did not by force and arms do the things, or anything else, wherewith the declaration charged her; but which denial would be of no avail, seeing that, by this very commendable piece of fiction, the said defendant was now within the jurisdiction of the Court of King's Bench; an honour to which she, in common with hosts of others, could never have attained, being only a commoner, but for the aforesaid ingenious contrivance. Whether she, or even Mr. Figgins himself, would get *out* of the jurisdiction with much honour, was doubtful, certainly not with a redundancy of coin.

During the reading of the foregoing production, Mr. Hawkes had been so intent on the wording, lest any little monosyllable should have inadvertently crept in that might vitiate its legality, and be taken advantage of by the opposing attorney, that he had not noticed the excited state of his client, who could scarcely retain his seat, or restrain himself from interrupting the reading, and at its conclusion rose, and wiped the perspiration from his brow, as he exclaimed,—

'Is all that true? How did you find it hout? Mr. 'Awkes,'—and he walked over to him, and seized his hand, and shook it with great warmth,—'Mr. 'Awkes, a thousand 'blegements—I'm never so much obleeged;—but have ye got him?' Mr. Figgins anxiously awaited his reply.

Taken aback by his client's unexpected view of the case, the attorney was at a loss to comprehend his meaning, and hesitated to reply.

'Have you got him, sir?' repeated Mr. Figgins, alarmed at his silence.

'Got who?' said the bewildered attorney.

'The chap what's going to do all that what you've been a reading of.'

'Got him?—her, you mean. To be sure. Didn't I tell you that my clerk nabbed her, and served her with the writ?'

Mr. Figgins was slightly relieved, and, shaking his still grasped hand, exclaimed, 'I'm hever so thankful to you and Mr. Skeggs! it were honcommon kind of you both. An' you're quite sure deaf Bodkins, as you call her, is safe now, an' can't do what you've been a reading of?'

'My good man, you are under a mistake. That's a fiction of the law, whereby your claim can be so put that, denying one, we get her on the other count,—a wise provision of the law, and which renders it so deep and delightful a study.'

To which the mystified Figgins yielded an unqualified assent, —very wisely, considering it was so deep that he couldn't see the bottom,—and returned to his seat, repeating to himself the words just heard, under the vain hope that by doing so a certain number of times, the meaning would ultimately evolve; but as this only resulted in confusing the term, he ventured to ask what a fixture of the law was.

Mr. Hawkes might have given sundry illustrations, drawn from some very striking cases, in which he himself had aided to make such fixtures, and then have further explained that, before the cause Figgins *versus* Bodkins was brought to a conclusion, it was more than probable that Mr. Figgins would be experimentally acquainted with its meaning, himself affording a better solution to his question than the attorney was disposed to give; but doubtless, in compassion for the dullness of his client's comprehension, he contented himself with the intelligible explanation that a fiction was an invention,—a something assumed to have been done that never was done.

'Then it hain't true what you read?'

'In a certain sense it is,' replied the cautious attorney, by no means inclined to admit what might lead to an unpleasant inference.

'But I needn't have no fear now that deaf Bodkins will way-

lay me with her force and harms, and them other things you read about?’

‘My good man, you are perfectly safe,—the law will throw its protecting arm around you.’

Instead of proving a consolation, this information rather startled Mr. Figgins, his first impression being that there was another assailant coming to the front; but, reassured by the attorney’s manner, he took up his hat to retire, quite content with the amount of legal information obtained in one morning, although rather doubtful if he had comprehended a word of it. Just, however, as he closed the door, he re-opened it, and, putting in his head, ventured to ask on what day he should call for the money. This was done with some hesitancy, arising from an idea that possibly Mr. Hawkes had already informed him, but, from his ignorance of the learned terms used in conveying the information, he had not understood it. To his astonishment and further bewilderment, however, he learned it was not likely to take place until a period far more remote than he had calculated on. Closing the door again, he approached Mr. Skeggs, who, on hearing the handle turn, had, as heretofore, immediately resumed his all-engrossing task, and of course was oblivious to that gentleman’s proximity, until advised thereof by Mr. Figgins nudging his arm, and thereby occasioning him to run his pen through half-a-dozen words. Mr. Skeggs was dismayed, and, jumping up from his stool, rushed in search of a piece of blotting-paper to aid in obliterating the erasure, but by the time he had procured it, the ink had dried in fast and firm.

‘Beg pardon, Tavy,—no ’arm, I ’ope? Just wanted to tell you how much I’m obleeged to ye for nabbing deaf Bodkins. Sorry you had so much trouble. I’ll not forget ye when ye get the money.’

Mr. Skeggs assumed a thoughtful air, took a pinch of snuff from Mr. Figgins’ proffered box, dusted his proboscis, and then, shaking his head, remarked, ‘Queer customer that! never had so much trouble in my life;—wouldn’t like to undertake it again at any price;’ and then went on to explain the various devices by which he sought to get into that lady’s presence,—all, however, unavailing, until he hit upon a happy expedient. Seeing the doors of her house were always kept bolted, he at last contrived to find out, through a child sitting on the door-step, and to whom he gave a stick of candy, that Mrs. Bodkins was just then closeted

with its mother in a back room, and, on going round to the yard, observed the window was slightly raised for the admission of air, it being a sultry day ; whereupon it occurred to Mr. Skeggs if he could only reach that window his work was accomplished. So, searching round, he spied an old cask lying on its side, which, from the straw therein, bore the appearance of being used as a dog-kennel. Rolling it stealthily under the window, he turned the bottom upwards and raised himself on the top, but found he wanted a few inches of reaching the casement, so as to be able to look in. Placing the writ between his teeth, he gave a spring and clutched the window-sill, by which he supported himself until he succeeded in sticking his toes into the interstices of the broken joints of brickwork ; then, relieving one hand, he threw the writ at the petrified Mrs. Bodkins, and was in a rapid manner proceeding to inform her of the nature of his proceedings,—drowned, however, by the screams of the affrighted woman with whom she was closeted,—when the treacherous foothold gave way, and the sudden motion relaxing his hold on the sill, his weight descended on the crazy barrel, and caused the bottom to give way, and Mr. Skeggs to disappear therein. The next moment he and the barrel were rolling to the bottom of the yard ; and before he could extricate himself therefrom, its tenant, who had returned from a prowling expedition in search of food, had him by the nether portion of his breeches. Mr. Skeggs' position was critical, for, recovering from her first alarm, the irate Mrs. Bodkins had rushed to the window, and, seeing the state of matters below, possessed herself of the first article that came to hand, which was the tongs, and, calling upon the other woman to come to her assistance, they flew down the back stairs and confronted Mr. Skeggs, who was vainly endeavouring to detach himself from the dog. In an instant half-a-dozen windows looking on to the yard were thrown open, and as many female heads in caps or dishevelled hair were poked out, each shouting out to pitch into him, for he deserved it,—they knew he was after no good, for they had seen him the last week dodging around the house. Matters looked serious ; but Mr. Skeggs had some experience in writ-serving, and more than once had occasion to depend upon some lucky thought to extricate himself from its unpleasant results. In the present aspect of affairs there was no time for consideration, as the two women came on with upraised weapons, which the tenacious hold of the ferocious dog prevented his avoiding. In desperation, therefore, as Mrs. Bodkins aimed a blow at his

head as she came running towards him, he swung himself half round, and so adroitly that the intended stroke fell with all its weight upon the head of the dog, causing him to loose his hold, and at the same time precipitating Mrs. Bodkins on to the prostrate brute; seeing which, the other woman halted, turned, and fled, pursued by Mr. Skeggs, who saw there was no time to lose, as the several heads had disappeared from the windows, doubtless with the intention of intercepting his departure; and, rushing down the by-streets, it is needless to say that he never stopped till he considered himself at a safe distance, and that he had not the gallantry ever afterwards to make any inquiries respecting Mrs. Bodkins' mishap. On the contrary, he was ungallant enough to entertain a hope that she had not escaped without some memorial of the event, if not of the same nature as his own,—scarcely probable, bearing in mind the configuration of the respective garments,—at least with an equivalent, which, besides a few bruises, would have especial reference to the part assaulted by the dog, whose depredation necessitated a renewal of a portion of his own outward covering.

Whilst Mr. Skeggs related the foregoing adventure, Mr. Figgins stood watching him with a suspicious look, and at the conclusion thereof, conceiving he had been entertained by another fictitious narrative, winked at that person, at the same time grinning and shaking his head, laid his finger to the side of his nose, and remarked that he supposed that was another fixture of the law, and that it was a better one than the lawyer's, intimating also that he thought the clerk would soon excel the principal in that particular line; whereat he went off into a loud haw, haw! but which he had mostly to himself, as Mr. Skeggs was at a loss to comprehend the witticism or see the point. But before he had time to inquire into its meaning, the inner room door was gently opened, and the attorney, attracted by Mr. Figgins' merriment, peeped out to ascertain the occasion thereof, but as his eyes fell on that gentleman, whose back was towards him, he quickly withdrew and as silently closed the door; but though unobserved by Figgins, it had not escaped Mr. Skeggs, who thereupon became so completely occupied in another piece of German text, that he took no further notice of the former, whom he just then wished anywhere but where he was. However, the worthy client was not at all discomposed by his silence; on the contrary, he pulled out his spectacle case and proceeded very leisurely to put on his glasses, and, looking over

Mr. Skeggs' shoulder, made sundry observations and admiring remarks on his wonderful attainments in the caligraphic art, and plied him with a variety of inquiries relative to the nature and intrinsic value of such cabalistic characters, and whether they were fixtures, or contained any special virtue similar to the document Mr. Hawkes had read to him; but as Mr. Skeggs only replied in a curt manner, Mr. Figgins returned his glasses to their case, and informing him that 'if he worked that hard he'd hinjure his brain,' bid him good-bye,—returning, however, before he finally disappeared, to remind him of his promise to remember him when he got Mrs. Bodkins' money; which promise Mr. Skeggs stopped engrossing long enough to assure him there was no fear of his forgetting.

Mr. Figgins' morning's initiation into some of the mysteries of law afforded him subject-matter of thought until he arrived at his home in Wapping. In disposition, Mr. Figgins was one of those few, in this lachrymose world of ours, who take things easy,—a doctrine he was trying to enforce on his friends, but with indifferent success. His own example was not wanting to aid his teaching; but this was due in some measure to the part that a good-natured, active little wife took in his affairs, thereby leaving him much at liberty, and whose counsels, though limited to the commonplaces of everyday-life, were pretty safe to follow, when sought or taken.

As a woman, Mr. Figgins affected to hold her opinion and judgment at a much lower estimate than his own, though only seldom, luckily, acting upon the latter; for, by a little womanly tact, Mrs. Figgins was generally able, especially when assisted by her daughter, to prevail in counsel,—too discreet, however, to dispute or question his acts at inopportune occasions. But it did sometimes occur that Mr. Figgins, in reliance on his own superior judgment, acted before taking counsel, and then it required no small tact to get him safely through, as he had generally blundered to some extent; and then, like other such intelligent men, he looked round to lay the charge of failure on some one else, which in his case would generally fall on his patient wife.

CHAPTER X.

MR. FIGGINS RESOLVES TO GIVE A PARTY.

‘ONLY think, father,’ exclaimed Mrs. Figgins, as her husband entered the shop, and commenced emptying his coat pockets on to the counter of an assortment of cowries and other small specimens of conchology, purchased of a sailor on his way home, and to be retailed to connoisseurs in such articles in the neighbourhood,—‘only think, the Bodkins had a large party last night, and they owing us, and not one of us asked to it!’

‘I s’pose they think they’re above us now, mother, ’cos they’ve gone into the chandlery and coals line,’ chimed in Jake, the eldest boy, a comely-looking lad. ‘People oughtener forget what they were, though, and how they made theirselves. We don’t have two bottoms to our peck,—do we, mother?’

‘Hush!’ said Mrs. Figgins. ‘Little boys should speak when they’re spoken to. But I s’pose it’s people that don’t pay their debts that can give parties.’ Mrs. Figgins was unconsciously indulging in what she reprobated in Jake.

‘Oh, well, ma,’ said a prepossessing young lady standing at the further end of the counter, and who during her father’s absence had attended to the shop, ‘I daresay they mean to pay.’

‘O yes, mean to,’ said Jake, unable to wait till he was spoken to; ‘in course they do; that’s very like a whale. Then why don’t she?’

‘Ah! Jake’s right,—why don’t she?’ said Mr. Figgins, seating himself on a box and wiping the bald part of his head with his handkerchief,—‘why don’t she?’

‘And then father could give a party too,’ added the boy, encouraged by the paternal approval of his view of the case. ‘Couldn’t ye, father?’

‘Oh, we’ll give a party some day,’ said Mrs. Figgins in a laughing tone.

'We'll give one to-morrow,' said Mr. Figgins, looking very much like an injured man, 'and then we'll show 'em what's what.'

'Oh, ah!' said Jake, clapping his hands, 'so we will;' and, seizing his hat, was about rushing out to communicate the decision to all his youthful friends around, in order to its more rapidly reaching the ears of the Bodkins, but was called back by Mrs. Figgins, who ventured to express a fear 'that father could not afford it just now, as they had not sold much this week.'

'Hafford it! that's just you,—hallery a 'arping on that string. Vell, if I hain't no richer, I won't be no poorer for it; an' 'sides, I've *fixed* her, and ve'll make Mother Bodkins pay for it;' and he looked quite knowingly.

'Fixed who?' said Arabella, the young lady just mentioned.

Mr. Figgins pursed up his lips, shook his head, and frowned; whilst his audience looked askance at one another, and then at him, awaiting a further explanation when it should please the great man to afford it. After keeping them duly in suspense, he addressed Miss Figgins.

'Knowed I'd be driven to it, though yer mother hadwised so 'ard agen it.'

'Why, pa, what have you done?' said the young lady, somewhat alarmed, as indeed were the rest.

'What 'ave I done?—what—'ave—I—done?' said Mr. Figgins, very slowly pronouncing each word, and then stopping short, thereby keeping the ladies in torturing suspense, but which Jake, impatient of the withheld information, volunteered to relieve.

'I know!' and as he drew the attention of all on himself, added, 'ordered the goodies for the party. Didn't ye, father?'

'What's the boy talking on?' said Mr. Figgins.

'Well, then, you've done something,' said Jake.

Mr. Figgins shook his head again, and, looking very solemnly at the boy, said, 'Jake, you're more wiser nor the whole kit. You'll be a man afore your mother and sister. You're right, Jake, for once,—I *'ave* done something.'

'Do tell us, father, what you're talking about,' said Miss Figgins, as she threw herself on his knee and began smoothing his hair.

'Put her to the law,' said he in a stern voice, and then looked around to observe the effect of his announcement.

'Put her to the law!' repeated Arabella and her mother

together, in surprise. 'You don't mean to say *that*?' added the former.'

'I do, though. I hain't goin' to be trifled with no more.'

'And is she there now?' said Jake, under the impression that Mrs. Bodkins had in some mysterious way been disposed of. May I go and see her? Ain't I glad! How long will you keep her there, father?'

'Till she pays hall of it,—hevery single 'apenny ;—I von't take hoff a farthing.'

'*All*, and *every*, and *off*, pa,—not *hall* and *hevery*,' said Miss Figgins, correcting him.

'Vell, hall and hevery, if you like,' said Mr. Figgins.

'You'll not be too hard on the poor woman,' interposed Mrs. Figgins.

'No, don't, pa,' said Arabella, laying her cheek against his. 'May be it might not be convenient to pay it all at once.'

'It'll be werry convenient,' said he. 'I von't reduct one farden.'

'*Won't*, pa,' said Arabella, again correcting.

'Vell, won't, then, if you'll have it so. So she needn't to try to palmer off no 'scuses on me.—Giving her parties, as Jake says!' and he looked at Jake, counting on his support.

'But why didn't ye put her there before the party, father?' said Jake.

'What's the boy talking on?' said Mr. Figgins, not relishing this imputation on his sagacity.

'But, pa,' said the young lady, as she took his hard fist into her small delicate hand, and pretended to beat it, 'be a good, dear old pa, and don't be naughty; or else—mind now.' And then, smiling in his face, added, 'You won't be hard on her, will you?'

'No, I von't, not if I can't help it. Now, look here, Bella, it's no use yer mother and you agoin' on like that,—it don't hargify *that*,' and he snapped his fingers. 'She's got to pay.'

'Oh, how dreadfully you talk!' said Miss Figgins, rising from his knee and withdrawing to the back of the counter in a pet. 'I don't know what's a matter with you this morning.'

'Matter! if you only know'd the 'alf.'

'What did she do, father?' said Jake.

'Do! I can't tell ye the 'alf that owdacious woman were a-goin' to do; but Mr. 'Awkes and Hoctavy'—at the mention of this last name Miss Figgins recovered her good-humour—'was too many for her; and on'y for them somebody might 'ave been a widow

and horphans.' Mr. Figgins looked mysteriously up at the ceiling, slightly in imitation of the attorney.

Mrs. Figgins and Arabella regarded him with an anxious look, whilst Jake looked at each by turns; and, concluding Mrs. Bodkins had interfered in the consummation of something his father considered desirable, he asked,—

'And can't they be now, father?'

Mr. Figgins looked at him severely and frowned, and his mother again reminded him that boys should only speak when spoken to,—an axiom that boys are always at war with, but one that, on such occasions as the present, Mrs. Figgins herself followed to advantage, always learning more than she would by questioning.

'They're goin' to make a fishskin,—no, that ain't it. If that boy ud on'y 'old his tongue, he confuzeells me. They're goin' to make a fixture in the law of her, an' I see'd Skeggs a makin' it out on to a sheepskin.'

'On to a sheepskin, pa!' said Arabella; 'what's that?'

'Oh, you vimmen don't know the 'alf as are goin' on in the world,' said Mr. Figgins, quite elated at the vantage this fresh acquisition to his own knowledge was giving him. 'Pend on it that sheepskin 'll fix her, an' she won't give no more parties.'

'Are they going to make a baa-lamb of her, father?' said the irrepressible Jake, who during this last piece of information had been listening, his mouth wide open with astonishment.

Mr. Figgins, however, only shook his head significantly, and said, 'They're goin' to make a fixture—in—the—law of her.' With which piece of information all parties had to be content, as any attempt at explanation might have confused Mr. Figgins again.

So Jake repeated to himself at sundry times the words, 'Law—fixture at law,' until its meaning resolved itself into a gibbet, similar to those memorials he had seen on an excursion down the river, and to which, he was informed, though now only a few links of chain remained, the bodies of some river pirates had been suspended, thereby adding much to the interest and beauty of the scenery along the banks of the Thames.

'But how will they do it, pa, with a sheepskin?' said Miss Arabella, hoping to obtain some light on this feature of the odd transaction.

Mr. Figgins scratched his head and looked posed, and then lided, 'Vell, I'd say that's a werry 'ard question.'

'Very, pa, you mean,' said Miss Figgins.

'Yes, that's what I *said*,—a *werry* 'ard question; and so it is.'

And as any further attempt at enlightenment respecting the predicament into which Mrs. Bodkins had been thrown through the agency of Messrs. Hawkes and Skeggs only added to the unintelligibleness thereof, and increased Mr. Figgins' confusion, the ladies forebore further catechizing, consoling themselves that it would come out, in some way or other, before long.

A few particulars respecting the Figgins family are necessary before proceeding further. Mr. Figgins carried on business under the sign of the 'Battle and the Breeze,' which sign was suspended from an iron bar projecting on to the street, whereon the battle was represented by a large quantity of red and yellow flame, issuing out of the sides of two Noah's arks, that were blazing away at each other without any visible effect, and apparently unmoved by wind or wave; the strength of the breeze being shown by the cocked hat of the commander of one of the strange craft being blown into the water, whilst he, the commander, the only person visible on either of the vessels, with sword in hand, in a very wild state, seemed about to leap after it. Above the window were the words, 'Variety Store;' and which variety consisted in all kinds of sailors' knick-knacks, described on the handbills and door-posts as hold-alls, thumb-stalls, tobacco-pouches, jack-knives, pocket-handkerchiefs, bearing thereon the colours of all nations, or ships in full sail with mermaids by their sides, with which sailors were presumed to be quite familiar; glazed hats, socks, braces,—a luxury, though rarely indulged in, yet invariably forming part of the sea kit,—blackening-brushes, needles, thread, and other articles *too numerous* to mention, not forgetting Dibdin's songs.

In addition to what has been said of Mrs. Figgins, it may be remarked that she retained evidences of having been a good-looking young woman; and though once possessing a fair share of animal spirits, the rough experience acquired by years of struggling with adverse circumstances, and the care of a small family, had sobered her down to a quiet, thoughtful person, intent only on ministering to the comfort and enjoyment of her easy-going husband and her well-cared for children (whose general demeanour witnessed to their good training), consisting, in addition to Arabella and Jake, of a younger boy and girl, called Benny and Toddles. Heretofore they had enjoyed such little and simple pleasures as their means afforded, without poisoning

their flavour by vain desires for what they had not, or useless regrets at the hardships and denials to which they were occasionally called to submit. But there were premonitions that this was changing. The autocrat of the establishment was not so communicative nor so easily controlled as formerly. The wants of the family as they grew older became greater, whilst from increased competition the business did not improve, thereby calling for greater economy when it was less possible, resulting in the necessity of resorting to expedients to effect it that had the tendency of irritating the father, and, as it curtailed the family *ménage*, also occasioning momentary repinings on the part of the children ; but with all this, the buoyant, hopeful disposition of Mrs. Figgins thus far had enabled them to cope, seconded as she was by her amiable daughter. Simple, open, and affectionate, Arabella was the counterpart of her mother, whom she was ever solicitous to emulate, and into whose little confidences she was admitted. With her father she was a great favourite, and ordinarily possessed an influence over him that she did not fail to use, when requisite, on the side of her mother, though equally solicitous for the happiness of all. Her natural exuberance of spirits and sprightly ways acted like a charm in the dwelling, and readily dispelled the gathering clouds. Any brusqueness in her utterances was speedily atoned by the sweetness of her disposition and artlessness of her manner, as yet uncorrupted by intercourse with the world, from which their retired mode of living had somewhat isolated them,—an isolation, however, that was not now likely to continue, as altering circumstances were ruthlessly interposing.

The occasional corrections of her father's orthoepy and etymology might appear to detract somewhat from this portraiture of Miss Figgins, but apologetically it may be urged that her parents had denied themselves in order to give her a better education than either had been fortunate enough to obtain ; and that, consequently, it is hardly to be wondered that her father's cockneyisms grated on her ear, and that, without any affectation of superiority, she should occasionally venture to correct what she at first thought only required to be pointed out, and an effort or two made to overcome, and it would be amended. As both father and mother were proud of her small attainments, they were not averse to their display, even at their own expense, which, however, they were not intended to be by the young lady ; consequently Miss Figgins was not checked in her efforts to keep her

father right in the v's, w's, and h's, as well as in the inflections of the verb to be ; but her pupil was not a very promising one, for, as on more than one occasion he good-naturedly remarked, 'he was afraid he were too hold, and that she were 'aving a 'ard time of it.' So at times she had almost come to the conclusion to give up the h's, and confine her attention to the rest. It was only on solitary occasions, when a little reflection might have deterred the young lady from pursuing her educational course, just at that time that Mr. Figgins, under momentary testiness, resented her corrections.

At the conclusion of her husband's profound intimation of the perilous position of Mrs. Bodkins, Mrs. Figgins, with her daughter, experienced some sympathy towards that lady, especially upon learning that she had become deaf, and which Mr. Figgins assured them would continue until the termination of the law-suit ; pending which they further learned there was no probability of obtaining the payment of her account. Upon ascertaining this last fact, the ladies mutually concluded it would be wise to postpone the contemplated party, lest it might lead to further embarrassment ; and as Mr. Figgins appeared to have regained his ordinary composure, and was just then engaged in vigorously polishing the cowries with his cuffs, Mrs. Figgins ventured to propose that they should wait until that more favourable occasion should arrive, and which she suggested, by way of adding weight thereto, would be additionally gratifying to all parties, as the expense thereof could be met with funds obtained from such a source,—although secretly hoping by that time the idea would have been given up.

'Yes, that's you—just you—'zactly ; no matter what I proposes, which is halways wrong—halways. I can't 'ave no henjoyment, stived up in this here shop, morning, noon, and night, huntill I'm a 'ermit,—never see nor 'ear of a friend. An' I been an' managed this haffair as no one in this 'stablishment could 'ave done, an' yet it are of no account.' Mr. Figgins assumed an injured air, and commenced a breathing whistle whilst he arranged and rearranged the shells in the window, and which, as it immediately attracted the attention of one or two passers-by, appeared to act favourably on Mr. Figgins. A whispered appeal by Miss Figgins to her mamma decided that lady to offer no further opposition, and all was soon restored to harmony, on its being amicably arranged that the entertainment designed to eclipse that of Mrs. Bodkins should take place on the following evening.

The list of the friends to be invited was soon made out, but, owing to their limited number, was added to by one or two much slighter acquaintances. Amongst the former was Mr. Octavius Skeggs, who, Mr. Figgins insisted, was a particular friend of *his*. From the eagerness with which the young lady entered into the proposition, it might be inferred he was no less so of the young lady herself, and creates a slight suspicion that he had been an additional motive in her advocacy of the party.

It was not long before the invitations were all written out in the neat penmanship of Miss Figgins; and as the evening closed in, Master Jake was on his way with a very special invitation from Mrs. and Mr. Figgins to Mr. Skeggs, informing him of the great desire they had that he should grace the company by his presence.

Mr. Skeggs' lodgings were in a narrow street abutting on Whitechapel Road, he having lately removed to that locality on the score of salubrity and economy, the latter doubtless the preponderating cause; the former admitting of a question, if the sweltering heaps gradually accumulating both in the street and the back yards were taken into account. The appearance of the tenements on the outside did not belie the character of the inside, and all presented nearly the same mean aspect, in rag-stuffed windows, rotten sashes, crumbling brick walls, and open doorways, entering upon dreary, uninviting passages and stairs, each of which appeared to have their full complement of children, judging by the begrimed little urchins sitting on the door-steps, or running in and out of the houses, and playing on the sidewalk.

The particular one in which Mr. Skeggs had taken up his abode, not being distinguishable from the rest, necessitated frequent inquiries by Jake as he perambulated the street, demanding of a gaping child or a sprawling boy, too intent on a game of marbles to listen to his question, the whereabouts of the gentleman he was in search of; indeed, Jake was impressed with the idea that the information sought was a secret to the neighbourhood, and had begun to despair of discovering his retreat, when, after undergoing a minute catechetical inquiry by a slipshod woman at the head of the street as to the appearance and peculiarities of the person he was in quest of, he learned that she had observed such a character enter the third house on the opposite side; whereupon Master Figgins crossed, and stood and commenced a survey in the hope of

discovering a bell or knocker by which to announce himself, but was speedily interrupted in his examination by the aforesaid woman shouting over and demanding why he stood there like a ninny,—didn't she tell him that was the house? and thereupon Jake ventured into the passage out of sight, lest he should draw on himself any further notice from his informant.

After waiting in hopes that some one might make his appearance, he adopted the expedient of stamping on the floor, and then pounding the wall, until finally an overgrown, dirty-faced girl, with her clothes slouching around her, apparently in danger of falling off, rose from the basement.

Eyeing her with some doubtfulness, Master Figgins inquired whether Mr. Skeggs lived there. The girl opened her eyes and mouth, stared, and, with a knowing wink, shook her head. Master Figgins wondered if she was the phenomenon girl that had lost her tongue, but thought he'd try again, and repeated the inquiry.

After one or two repetitions more, the girl grinned and disappeared; at that moment, however, a boy very much the ditto of the girl ascended from the same depths, and took a vacant survey, until he was interrupted by Jake demanding, in a loud key, 'if Mr. Skeggs did not live there.'

'Kegs!' at length ejaculated the boy; 'what kegs?'

'*Mr. Skeggs*,' repeated Figgins junior, emphasizing the words.

'Oh, Skeggs! What's that?'

'Why, it's a gentleman, ain't it?' answered Jake rather put out at the question.

'Oh, gennleman! Then he don't live here,' and, before any further questions could be put, vanished whence he came.

'Well,' thought Jake to himself, 'if this isn't a queer place!' and then, waxing wroth, he commenced hammering with greater violence, until he heard a movement above, and a female on the first floor came to the head of the stairs, and demanded what he meant by kicking up that row, and advised him to go somewhere else to play them games, if he didn't want a dishclout about his ears, at the conclusion of which Jake essayed to make the purport of his disturbance known, when the angry lady, somewhat mollified, directed him to come up, and go up the next stairs, and he'd find the person he wanted second door back. Feeling his way cautiously up the second dark flight, he incurred a further rebuff by knocking at the wrong door, but finally found himself safe inside the apartment of the object of his search.

At the moment Master Figgins arrived, Mr. Skeggs was seated in his back snugery, as he designated it, partaking of a meal that answered for dinner and tea, the one represented by the half of a poloney, the other half having filled that rôle the day before ; the tea being more ably represented by sundries, composed of the residue of a quarter of a pound of fivepenny moist sugar, a gallipot containing a small quantity of milk, or something answering to that name and purpose, the crust of a half-quartern loaf, and a basin of tea, just emptied from a tin shaving-pot, which served the general purposes of the culinary department, as well as that to which its name more immediately pointed. As Mr. Skeggs wished to avoid any bilious tendencies, he eschewed butter, but, as a substitute, occasionally anointed his bread with treacle, his crusts being reserved for sop, which he conveyed to his mouth with his digits, it being a maxim of his that 'fingers were made before forks ;' but why forks, when it might have occurred to him that a spoon would have been more suitable, does not appear. A long six, stuck into the mouth of a stone blacking-bottle, narrowed by a stuffing of rags, threw a dim light over the table, but scarcely beyond, or sufficiently to reveal the arrangement of Mr. Skeggs' domestic economy.

Mr. Skeggs gave a very pressing invitation to Master Figgins to draw up and tuck in, but as the latter had fortunately tea'd before starting, he declined ; and thereupon, not to detain him, the former, after some difficulty in procuring paper, and which he was compelled, unseen by Jake, to obtain from a blank page at the end of an old grammar, indited a note expressive of the great pleasure it afforded him in accepting the invitation, and, having folded the same into a neatly-shaped cocked hat, confided it to the safe keeping of the young gentleman, who, in response to his inquiry, faintly assured Mr. Skeggs that he was not afraid to go down the street alone, it being by this time quite dark, and lost no time in retreating from the neighbourhood, leaving that gentleman to conclude his meal without further interruption.

'Hem ! hem ! ahem !' coughed Mr. Skeggs, endeavouring to divert a crumb of bread to its right channel, which, having succeeded in doing after a few more efforts, he leaned back in his chair, his hands clasped round the back of his head, and fell into a train of thought. 'Well, I did think it would be strange if I wasn't asked out there soon. Let me see, who'll be there?—Miss Figgins,—sweet girl Miss Figgins,—her mamma, Miss

Julep, three Miss Mudfogs,—let me see, how many's that?'—Mr. Skeggs thereupon unclasped his hands, and recommenced his enumeration of anticipated guests, telling them off on his fingers until he had exhausted their number, and, by adding several names quite unknown to the Figginses, though amongst his own acquaintance, made out a very respectable list, but altogether deficient in males, probably intending to monopolize the whole bevy. 'Shall only dance with Miss Potts once,—turned up her nose at me at Muggins' party. I'll have to make a speech, but there'll be no time to learn one.' He appeared lost in a reverie. 'That's it!' and he slapped his thigh. 'Well thought of! the one I spoke at Muggins' will do with an alteration of names.' Upon this Mr. Skeggs rose, and, turning his chair towards the mantelpiece, stood thereon and took a view of himself in a broken looking-glass suspended to the wall, and, after placing himself in two or three attitudes, until he suited himself to one more striking than the rest, commenced a rehearsal of the second-hand speech, but in which every now and again he was brought to a stop, by forgetting to substitute Figgins for Muggins, and, on arriving at the compliment to be addressed to Miss Arabella, it got considerably mixed, as that young lady was dark, and had black hair and eyes; whilst Miss Delinda Muggins, for whom it was composed, was fair, and especial reference was made in the said address to blue eyes.

During the recital of the speech, in which he displayed great vehemence and beautiful action, Mr. Skeggs had more than once been so carried off by his impassioned oratory, that it was a marvel he had not stepped back on to the tea-table, and thereby wound up by the destruction of his tea-set, but fortunately he escaped with nothing further than upsetting the milk-ewer, the gallipot aforesaid. Mr. Skeggs having gone through the speech, with its amendments and corrections, to his own satisfaction, commenced overhauling his dress outfit, which he declared to be in first-rate order, with the exception of the white kids, that seemed to have done duty rather frequently, but which, he decided, only wanted a little stitching and cleaning to render them also first-rate, and so wrapped them in a piece of paper, with the intention of renovating them at the office with rubber.

His arrangements all completed, Mr. Skeggs put on his hat, drew on his tanned gloves, and, armed with his dog-headed stick, sauntered into Mile-end for a stroll, not without attracting the

attention of more than one young lady residing in his own street, and eliciting their admiration of his fine person, and who took particular care to be at their doorways for a recognition and a few minutes' chat on his return, for which a special look-out was kept.

Aroused the next morning from a delightful dream, founded on the occurrence of the last evening, Mr. Skeggs was additionally cheerful, and bethought him that it would not be amiss to rub up his dancing, as he would doubtless be much in request for that portion of the evening's proceedings; and thereupon commenced arranging sundry articles of furniture in the form of a square to represent the various couples. He had got to the last figure, and was galloping round the room with the chair that represented his partner, when, to his dismay, the church clock struck nine, the hour to which his governor—the comprehensive title by which Mr. Skeggs, in common with lawyers' clerks, designated his employer—insisted upon his being punctual. In an instant, dance, party, and speech gave way to the startling fact, and, seizing his hat and berlins, he darted down the stairs into the street, and, without deigning a look or nod at the aforesaid ladies, who had been wondering if he were sick, from his being so much after time, soon emerged into Whitechapel Road.

Without having ever fallen in with *Chesterfield's Advice*, Mr. Skeggs' intuitive sense had taught him never to hurry through the street,—not probably for the same reason as urged by that luminary, but because it suited his humour; in consequence, it became necessary on such occasions as the present to start earlier than otherwise needful, when Mr. Skeggs' careless air and sauntering manner usually impressed the few who were attracted by it, with the idea that his time was his own,—not that they conceived he was too well off to need employ, but that in all probability he could not get it. It was therefore with some degree of mortification that Mr. Skeggs found himself for once compelled to exert more than ordinary despatch; arrived at the Road, and looking up at the clock, he saw the minute hand pointed to ten minutes past. 'Bless me,' said Octavius to himself, 'is it that late?' What was to be done? There was no help for it, but to step out double-quick. Off he went,—fast, faster, faster still,—and in less than five minutes he was fairly running. 'What can people see in me to be staring at?' thought Mr. Skeggs; but the idea originated in his own fanciful conceptions, for at that hour every one in that bustling neighbourhood appeared to

be equally on the rush, and quite unconscious that so important a person as Octavius Skeggs was competing with them. He knocked his hands together, stamped along heavily, and panted and shrugged his shoulders, intending thereby to convey the impression that the coolness of the morning occasioned his accelerated speed ; but as it was not a cold morning, but quite the contrary, he succeeded in attracting the attention he desired to avoid. But on he went,—there was no alternative,—but had not proceeded far before he fancied he caught the sound of feet clattering behind him. It gained upon him, was at his heels, and now at his elbow. He cast a hurried glance thereat, and discovered a ragged urchin running and panting by his side. Observing that he was noticed, the boy looked up at Mr. Skeggs with a grin on his unwashed countenance, that, correctly interpreted, implied he could run as fast as the gen'l'man ; but the gentleman being in no mood for sport, frowned fiercely on the boy, who only grinned in return. Skeggs frowned still more wickedly, but without effect : the boy was not to be disconcerted or driven from a feat, in his estimation, rather meriting approval than censure. Skeggs pulled up and walked, so did the boy ; he started again, so did his tormentor. He could not stand it, and, acting on the irritation of the moment, bestowed a box on the young gentleman's ear that made it tingle again, just at the instant when his countenance was lighted up by a broad grin expressive of triumph. Astonished, and writhing under the effect of the blow, he flew to the gutter, and seized a handful of mud : in another second Mr. Skeggs presented the appearance of a spotted leopard. The youngster did not await the issue, but darted down the first street and fled, leaving the unfortunate Skeggs to be indebted to a coalheaver, who happened to be passing, for an attempt at scraping the mud off his clothes, but which appeared only to extend its surface. And whereupon a crowd quickly collected, who, in answer to the respective demands of what was a matter, soon spread it around that the gentleman had been knocked down and run over by the coalheaver's waggon, thereby eliciting varied animadversions and cries of shame, and that the said coalheaver should be taken before the Lord Major for driving at that rate, and breaking the man's leg ; but concerning which latter disaster Mr. Skeggs soon relieved them from any further anxiety, by crossing the street and going off like a man with a pair of very sound legs. But hark ! the half-hour was striking. Off darted Skeggs once

more, the loss of his lucrative situation before his eyes, and, after running over a child, spinning round an elderly lady, and almost capsizing an old woman's apple-stall, he arrived at his office just three-quarters of an hour behind time; and as something of importance requiring our presence usually occurs during our absence, so was it that morning, and Mr. Skeggs accounted himself peculiarly fortunate in escaping with a reprimand from the governor, coupled with the information that if he, Skeggs, could not manage to be at the office in proper time, he, the governor, would get some one that could.

Six o'clock appeared, notwithstanding this abridgment of the official day, a long time coming, but come at last it did, and struck; so did Mr. Skeggs, who, popping his tools in his desk, declared he had shut up shop, and was preparing to depart, when Mr. Hawkes unexpectedly returned, and requested him to make a copy of a bill of costs, that he was anxious to despatch to his agent in the country by a gentleman leaving by mail that evening.

'Just like him,' muttered Skeggs,—'sure to find something to do when it's time to leave off.' But, knowing by experience there was no alternative, he completed the task, and was once more preparing to make a precipitate retreat, when the attorney entered, and begged Mr. Skeggs to be so kind as to enclose the bill of costs in an envelope, and leave it with the party at the White Horse, Fetter Lane, on his way home.

'On my way home!' muttered Mr. Skeggs as soon as Mr. Hawkes was beyond hearing,—'leave it on my way home—three miles out of it! I won't stand it—I won't!' and he slammed down the lid of his desk, forced his hat on one side of his head, pulled open the door, and then banged it too, and had reached the foot of the stairs before he remembered that he had not locked it, and thereupon returned to do so, but which, owing to his disturbed state of mind, he was farther delayed in doing, for the sufficient reason that he had the wrong key; but at length, having calmed a little, he effected this duty, and strode down the yard with a very defiant look, to the no small admiration of the porter at his firmness and clerkly bearing, and who could not help expressing to a char-woman, sweeping out a neighbouring office, his conviction that Mr. Skeggs would some day become a great man, and that he knewed he was well connected; which evidenced some degree of penetration on the part of the porter, who might be supposed to be a judge of character, seeing he was

in the habit of having to do with so many different ones in the yard; and also a larger acquaintance with Mr. Skeggs' paternity than possessed by that gentleman himself, his antecedents not being very reliable, report stating that he had graduated in a charity school at the east end of London, whence he had risen to his present high position, but from whom his descent was derived, there being no trace of his pedigree in the said institution, was uncertain. One thing, however, may be asserted with confidence, there was no consanguinity between him and the family of which Miss Caroline Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs of 'Vicar of Wakefield' celebrity was so worthy a member, notwithstanding Mr. Skeggs' doubts, called forth by the suggestion of a learned man to that effect on a subsequent occasion in this history, as will appear.

CHAPTER XI.

BLACK MONDAY—MR. GRUMPY SHOWS FIGHT.

WHO, provided he lived in London at the date of this story, does not recall with a glow of admiration the august forms of those portly old vigilants, who at that time, and of yore, kept nightly watch and ward over the lives and property of themselves and fellow-citizens, disappearing so mysteriously with the earliest dawn of day. What are the buttoned-up, labelled, blue-coated bobbies in comparison with those loose, massive, awe-inspiring guardians of the night, whose place they have assumed? You shake your venerable heads,—for venerable they must be if you date back to those days, or more correctly nights (for, like the Minervian bird, *they* shunned the day),—and respond, ‘Tadpoles to toads.’

Picture them, enveloped in capacious drab coat, overlaid with layer upon layer of cape, depending from broadest of shoulders, with worsted cap drawn over a bald pate, impervious to assault and battery, surmounted by a low-crowned, broad-brimmed glazed hat, or more serviceable sou-wester tied under the chin; a huge rattle stuck into a leather waist-belt, a large horn lantern swinging in one hand, whilst the other grasped a giant-killer bludgeon, serving the twofold purpose of support to his tottering limbs, and the enforcement of his sonorous mandates to some loitering stragglers to ‘move on, move on,’ the command being accompanied by the heavy thumps of the said staff on the pavement. How majestically he struggled along under the weight of cloth and years, inspiring an awe at his appearance that compelled submission to his authoritative utterances. And then how musical his tones as he quavered forth, ‘P-a-a-st t-w-e-l-v-e o’clock!’ throwing in an occasional grace-note. What a complacent sense of security crept over one, when, starting from a disturbed sleep by the fancied noise of burglars at our street

door, we were quickly relieved by that watchful cry, succeeded by a faint scuffle with some midnight reveller, who, fumbling at our door, was persisting in the strange delusion that it was his own; and thus, reassured of our safety, we turned on the other side and fell asleep, thanking our stars that we had lighted on days when the city was so well kept. Whilst a similar feeling of security was experienced by the nocturnal prowlers, who, warned by the same cry as to the whereabouts of the old mufti, felt themselves equally safe whilst transacting business in their own line at the jeweller's shop, at that end of the street first visited, and for which ample time would be afforded to finish the job; since, having certified the neighbourhood of his untiring vigilance, they knew old Argus would, according to established custom, retire to his 'box' for sage contemplation on the grave responsibilities of his office; then soon, without the aid of harmonic Mercury, in peaceful repose to close his hundred eyes, which, it is presumed, must have been under his nightcap, until, startled from visions of the 'breaking morn' by his wakeful friend, the parish clock, he resumed his lonely round; or, as was equally probable, until rudely awoke from Elysian dreams by the merry pranks of his old friends, 'Tom and Jerry,' in whose halcyon days it was the crowning feat of bacchanalian revelry to come upon one of these grand old fellows during their somnolence, and, by a united precipitation of themselves upon the rear of his wooden retreat, send him sprawling on the pavement, very much after the manner of a tortoise, with his shell on his back, where they left him making frantic efforts to liberate himself; and where, leaving him also, we only stop to ask, Where, too, are these revellers? Alas! when Charlies went out, in mournful sympathy these merry knights of the dismal hours disappeared too, leaving us to realize, in memory only, the days of 'Life in London,' and 'John Street, Adelphi.'

'Past four o'clock, and a cloudy morning!' drawled out the ancient watch, to whom the nightly safe-keeping of the district embracing St. Martin's Lane had been confided;—'past four o'clock!' and he stopped at the house in which Mr. Grumphy and his friends resided, and then, pushing open the unfastened door, groped his way up the stairs by aid of his lantern, until, reaching Mr. Grumphy's door, and subsequently Miss Austen's, he aroused the inmates, as he had been requested over night to do.

It was not long before a blazing fire enabled Miss Austen to

have the unusually early breakfast prepared, and thereupon afforded leisure to attend to Willie, who, unaccustomed to such early rising, had gone off into a sound sleep after his first call. After two or three shakes on the part of the lady, and abortive attempts on the part of Willie to open his eyes, he managed to pull them apart, and, by the aid of Miss Austen, and a succession of stretches, that secured his steadiness, proceeded to dress, during which he became sufficiently awake to realize that black Monday had at last arrived. Information had been conveyed the previous day that the smack would positively sail the next morning with the tide. He had scarcely got half through his toilet, when a tap at the door announced his sorrowing friend, Mary Jones, who needed no one to awaken her on such an occasion, and who relieved Miss Austen of any further attention to the adjustment of his garments, and at the conclusion thereof, at the request of Aunt, stepped down to Mr. Grumphy's door to inform him that breakfast was ready, it having been arranged the previous night that all were to take that meal together.

Mary returned, followed by the assistant, who, as he entered, slightly bowed, and took his seat at the table without bestowing any recognition on the children, fully resolved to resume his wonted stoicism, in the hope of thereby undergoing the coming ordeal with greater comfort to himself. This resolve, however, was speedily dissipated, as literally as the morning cloud, announced by the watchman, was disappearing before the rising sun, the latter embodied in the small person of Willie, who, without heeding his cold manner, climbed on the assistant's knee, threw his arms round his neck, and gave him such a squeeze as fairly broke the ice, and elicited in response so warm a pressure to his heart, that it seemed as though he was trying to get him bodily into it. After a few seconds, recalled by Miss Austen's warning that they must not lose too much time, he replaced him in his chair and mechanically pursued his meal.

'Why don't you eat, Willie?—you're taking nothing,' said Mary.

'Yes, I am, but I'm not hungry this morning.' Who is, on such occasions? And yet with what persistence does each one endeavour to force on you what would amount to double an ordinary meal, and on failure thereof to predict with certainty the consequences of such moderation? But, tempting as was the toast, buttered with the freshest of butter, and the egg so nicely boiled, the water-cresses so green, and even the rare delicacy of anchovy paste procured for the occasion, so kindly pressed for

acceptance, there was little disposition in either hostess or guests to partake thereof. Willie's loss of appetite was shared in by the rest, and, extending to the conversation, the meal was gone through with depressing silence.

'I think it's time you were getting ready, Willie,' at length remarked Miss Austen, and which, recalled to himself. Mr. Grumphy confirmed by looking at his watch. All rose from the table with a feeling of relief, and just then a noise, resembling some one falling up-stairs, accompanied by boisterous demands for Miss Austen's room, announced that the cab that was to convey them to Wapping had arrived.

'Now, put your arm into that sleeve,' said Mary, helping Willie to get on his greatcoat, and in doing which the arm went past the sleeve into Mary's face, whereat both laughed, as children will do, even at such times; and then ensued the buttoning up and tying round the throat, until Willie declared she was choking him, and the cap pulled over his eyes, that had to be readjusted so as to show his handsome forehead, as Auntie said as she inspected his appearance to ascertain that Mary had omitted nothing; having herself, in the meanwhile, been engaged in depositing in his trunk a paper parcel containing a new suit of clothes, and another with toys and books, the latter left by a stranger late the previous evening, and also her own most treasured gift, a brand-new small gilt-edged Bible, with Willie's and donor's name written on the first blank leaf. The key of the trunk was then carefully deposited in his pocket; and now, as the cabman carried the trunk down-stairs, all felt the moment that each had in thought endeavoured to keep so far away, had actually come, —no longer to be pushed aside, but confronting them in its veritableness, and challenging the strength of their artificial restraint.

'Well, Willie,' said Miss Austen, with great self-control, as she stooped down and put her arm around him, 'we must bid you good-bye, darling; but it's only for a time,—a short time, I hope.' A choking sensation was experienced, but immediately coughed down, and she continued: 'Take care of yourself, Willie, and don't sit in a draught to catch cold;' and there followed a string of injunctions usual on such occasions, and mostly forgotten as soon as uttered. 'Mind I have your ring safe for you.' 'You'll not forget Auntie, and write as soon as you can. I have put the address between the leaves of your Bible.' 'Be a good boy; and, above all, don't forget Him who loves you

better than do all others.' Then, looking into his tearful eyes with the tenderness of a loving woman, she imprinted a long and last kiss—the last she ever gave him—on his soft pale cheek; then rose and retired a few steps to allow Mary to take her farewell, and to stifle the emotion almost overmastering her.

Mary, who had been looking on with an intensity of feeling, testified to by the big tears coursing one another down her rosy cheeks, advanced, and, unable to exercise any restraint, threw her arms around his muffled neck, and, passionately kissing him, exclaimed in broken words, 'Oh, Willie dear! what'll I do without you?' and her sobs checked any further utterance.

The rugged heart of the assistant, who during this leave-taking had withdrawn to the passage, was moved as the sounds reached his ear, and he was about retreating to the further end thereof, when the cabman re-entered the passage below, and in a rough voice called up that they were detaining him too long, as he was to be paid for the distance, and not by the hour.

This coarse reminder had the immediate effect of restoring them to a collected state; and, drying their eyes, they followed Mr. Grumphy as he led Willie down the stairs to the vehicle, during which Mary contrived to drop a penknife into his coat pocket, that she had almost forgotten, and that he was to keep for her sake. To prevent any further demonstration, the assistant lifted the boy into the cab, and, seating himself by his side, instructed the man to drive off quickly, which he did, watched until out of sight by the two sorrowing ones, who returned to their room to more sadly realize that its light was gone, and to pass through another of those painful experiences that come to spoil one's happiest dreams, and shed their gloom over some of life's brightest visions, and henceforth augment the bitterness of the present by the ideal of what it might have been but for the past.

What at such times are all the bygone worries occasioned by that infant boy or girl?—those unpremeditated acts that fretted us so? What matters now that broken chair, the soiled new dress, or the little blue slippers ruined by the green, slimy mud through which those tiny feet *would* paddle? What matters? It does matter! Were they the occasion of harsh reproof?—of passionate rebuke? What would we not give to recall them, —to have never exhibited that temper? Break all! ruin all! make a desert and a wreck of the playroom and the toys,—of all that made me chide so testily! *They* can be replaced; but

oh, my little love ! give me back the boy that laughed so innocently in my face, expecting, instead of my reproof, my approval of his fancied achievement. How many a sigh as I enter the silent nursery ! how many a vain regret would I have been spared, had I chided less over my inked cloth or broken china ! Wert thou here again but for one short day, didst thou spoil my best and break my newest, nothing but a gentle voice should greet thee. And can *that* never be again?—never again the little foot upon the stair, the impatient pounding at the door, accompanied by the musical voice of the little autocrat demanding admittance, and failing which, the bursting open the door, and falling headlong into the room, and then sitting on the floor with a merry laugh at my half-vexed, scolding face. The blithesome prattler that danced around the room like a beautiful sunbeam, diffusing life and joy,—will it return no more ? Are those sounds hushed only for a night, to return with the morning light ? Oh, say not that for ever they are gone !

Nothing but memories left ! There's the old room and the little cot,—but where the tenant ? Put away that little sock ; take that chair out of sight. Let not the eye rest on what makes the heart so sad. The plans, the hopes, the visions of a life are all changed,

Young and ardent, the gushing nature of Mary would soon recover its wonted tone, and pursue other allurements, that in their turn, bringing their mingled quota of pleasure and pain, would tone down her early sorrow ; whilst Miss Austen, already well tried in the furnace, and purified thereby, would cleave the closer to that support and for that comfort whence her chequered life had taught her it alone could be derived. Under cover of the sheltering wings she would abide and trust ; and as her confidence in 'the word' was implicit, by the side of that empty cot she would daily plead that He who loved children would guard and give strength and grace to her boy, and fit him for heaven ; and her strong faith assured her that according to her request so it would be done. Happy they who have such to plead for them !

The chilly, damp morning and their oppressed spirits disinclined either Mr. Grumphy or Willie to converse ; and as the driver was desirous of earning his fare as speedily as he could, he urged his horse on at its best pace. As it was still early, and the streets unobstructed by the crowd of vehicles that, a little later, would impede the traffic, they reached their destination

in reasonable time. Carrying the trunk on his shoulder, and taking Willie by the hand, the assistant entered the covered passage or warehouse of the Stockton Smack Company, but through which he found it difficult to thread his way, from the numerous packages scattered about.

Everybody was in commotion: goods arriving at the last moment, and unloading from waggons by hoisting-cranes; porters, with heavy cases on knotted heads, rushed past each other to obtain first attention; whilst warehousemen, too busy to attend to any but themselves, despite appeals, went on loading their hand-trucks, and wheeling such goods as were checked on board the different vessels lying alongside the quay, all running and shouting according to the real or fancied need.

'Hoy, you! out o' that, if you don't want to be run over!' bawled a truckster to the assistant, who had only just time to pull the boy aside to prevent his being knocked down.

'Can't you see where you're agoin' to, young 'un?' yelled another, with a truck-load of cordage and rope, as, in endeavouring to avoid the first, Mr. Grumphy had planted Willie in the way of the other.

'I say, you chap with the box, don't you see them cases coming down that 'ere hatchway 'bove you?' sang out a third.

Almost bewildered, Mr. Grumphy and the boy rushed from one side to the other, breaking their shins over a barrel, and nearly upsetting a tilting pile of small boxes, until at last they managed to reach the office at the further end.

'Oh, that's the boy, eh? Well, take him aboard and give him in charge of the master; fare's paid, I see. Here, don't leave the trunk here,—take it with you.'

Thereupon, ascertaining to whom the designation of master applied, Mr. Grumphy made sundry attempts to get on board the vessel, in doing which he had nearly fallen into the water between the wharf and ship, and barely managed to dodge the bales that were being swung on board by the derrick. Eventually he contrived to get all safely on to the deck, with a feeling as much akin to thankfulness as he was able to experience, under the delusion that his difficulties were now over. At a loss, however, to comprehend where the master was to be found, he inquired of a mongrel sort of a person, neither landsman nor mariner, who was attending to the halyards and lowering the aforesaid bales into the vessel's hold, the man answered curtly, 'Aft.'

'Where?' said Mr. Grumphy, after a moment's deliberation, not being familiar with nautical terms.

'Art deaf, man? Aft, didn't ar' tell t'ye afore?'

'Aft,' repeated Mr. Grumphy to himself, watching the descent of the bale and then looking down the hatchway, and from that to the top of the mast, and then to the forecabin. 'Aft! I wonder where that is?'

'Tak' that lod out t' gangway, you lubber; don't t' see yon crate coomin' doon?' shouted a man on the vessel.

Jumping aside just in time, Mr. Grumphy began to think he had only got out of the frying-pan into the fire. Almost in despair, he looked towards the stern, and saw a rough-looking individual, habited in a pea-jacket and oil-skin hat, emerging from a hole, and made towards him, and asked, as the man approached, where 'aft' was, to which he replied with a smile, quite refreshing under present circumstances, however meant, 'Well, you're about there now.' Whereupon Mr. Grumphy demanded if he could tell him where he'd find the master, and was informed that the party addressed was that dignitary, but this Mr. Grumphy seemed inclined to question, having pictured to himself a totally different kind of a personage. However, he stated the nature of his business, and requested to know if it was all correct. After referring to a memorandum book that he took from his pocket, and making a few unimportant inquiries, it was declared all right, and Mr. Grampus (as the master construed the assistant's name into) was requested to bring the boy below.

Leading the way, he conducted them to the hole whence he had just issued, by the side of which lay a cover that, in stress of weather, was put on the top thereof, thereby effectually shutting out, not only water, but light and air,—probably in that marine cave not so essential to human existence, from the extra supply usually enjoyed on deck.

'Go on,' said the master, seeing Mr. Grumphy hesitated.

'Where to,—down-stairs?' said the assistant, as he stood eyeing the top of a ladder the bottom of which was not discernible in the darkness of the place to which it conducted.

'Well, yes, if you call them stairs,' said he, leading the way, and taking hold of Willie's trunk as he descended. Willie instinctively shrunk back as he looked at the receding figure.

'Come on,' said Mr. Grumphy, as he made an attempt to follow the master into his sea cave, and, with his back to the

ladder, placed his foot on the two first rounds, but, having nearly lost his balance, quickly regained the deck.

'Come down stern foremost,' shouted the man; and thereupon the assistant turned, and, facing the ladder, commenced descending as directed, at the same time guiding Willie's feet until they reached the floor of what he learned was the cabin, at the further end of which the captain, as the master was designated by the crew, was stowing away the trunk.

'This way,' said the captain; but as the pent-up place was only lighted from the small hatchway down which they had come, Mr. Grumphy had some difficulty in going over to the captain. 'This is his berth, under mine, so as he'll not fall out; and here's his trunk. He'll be cosy here; and as he's the only passenger, he'll have it all to himself.'

The close vitiated atmosphere, reeking with the smell of tar, musty clothing, tainted junk or salt pork, and other edibles, and impregnated with tobacco-smoke, was almost unendurable to the not otherwise squeamish assistant, who was compelled to return to the foot of the ladder to recover himself.

The master being called on deck, the assistant took Willie's hand, who had crouched to his side, and, seating himself on a bench, asked him how he liked it.

'What are we here for?' said the frightened boy.

'Why, this is what you're going to school in!'

'In this? And are you going with me?' and he instinctively pressed closer to his side.

'No, my boy, not—not this time; but you'll not mind that. You'll soon get there.'

'Are you going to leave me here alone, in this terrible place?' he looked round with alarm.

'I'll have to; but that won't matter,—you'll soon like it.'

'Oh, don't leave me here alone! Take me back! take me back!' said the boy. 'I can't go.' And he looked into the assistant's face with such an appealing look, that he felt himself almost unmanned, but after a minute endeavoured to calm the agitated boy.

'Aunt won't be angry with you,—O no! indeed she won't.'

'But Dr. Scarr would,' said the assistant.

'Oh, never mind him. He's a bad man to send me here; and I'll hide away from him, and he'll never know; and I'll do anything for you, and I'll work for Aunt, and go to school with Mary. Oh, say, do say you'll take me back, out of this dreadful place;'

and, glancing stealthily round, lest there might be any one there to forcibly detain him, he clambered wildly up on the assistant's knee, and threw his arms around his neck, as he passionately again exclaimed, 'O no, you won't leave me, will you?—say, dear Mr. Grumphy;' and he drew back his head, and looked piercingly into his face, whilst he still convulsively clung to him, as though to read the response, and to compel the acquiescence he implored.

Unable to control his agitation, he pressed the boy to his breast, and in broken tones replied, 'It's hard, my child,—it's hard, cruel hard. Don't hate me for it,—no, don't *you* hate me,' and his voice quivered; then, regaining slightly his composure, he said in a tenderer tone, 'No, *you'll* always love me,—won't you, dear little fellow?' and he held him back, as he looked into his eyes, and stroked the glossy hair from his wet face.

A spasmodic clutching at his neck, and a shiver that shook his whole frame, told the agony through which the boy was passing, and he exclaimed with bitterness, 'O no! no! no! Mr. Grumphy, don't;—you won't—you mustn't leave me,—no! no! O no! no!'

The broad chest of the assistant heaved, and he dared not trust himself to speak; whilst the boy clung to him with an energy that implied a determination not to let him go. A spirit of indignation and remorse took possession of Mr. Grumphy, as he sat with his arms around the clinging boy, at one time against his cold-hearted employer, and anon at his own complicity in the transaction; and during which his temper rose, until he felt disposed to dispute and quarrel with any and every one.

He had been some while chafing thus, when he felt the little arms around his neck relaxing their hold, and presently the heavy breathing told him that, overcome by the noxious heated atmosphere, and the exhaustion occasioned by his excessive emotion, and it may be the early hour at which he had arisen, Willie had fallen into a heavy sleep. Immediately it occurred to him that this was the opportunity to spare himself an ordeal, through which he was becoming utterly at a loss to know how to pass. So, carrying the boy over to his berth, he laid him gently therein, looked a few minutes at the pale, tear-besmeared face, still twitching from the effect of his disturbed feelings, and would have pressed his lips to his forehead, but that he feared to wake him; and then hurried to the deck,

every muscle of his hard features evidencing how strong was the emotion with which he was contending.

He passed the master, who was engaged with the men in preparing the vessel for hauling into the stream, and stopped to inform him that the boy was asleep 'down-stairs,' and slipped a half-crown into his hand, commending him to his attention. As he regained the wharf the planks were withdrawn and the vessel swung off, and he turned away to breathe more freely, and congratulate himself on the unexpected chance by which he had been spared the dreaded parting.

Elated somewhat at his achievement, though still affected by his indignation at the whole proceeding, he walked down the warehouse,—now less encumbered, and in which the bustle had partially ceased,—every now and then flapping his sides with an almost savage impetuosity.

'Cock-a-doodle-do !' sang out one of the men, who, in common with the rest, had been attracted by this novel performance, and which was echoed by all the others. Encouraged by the general laughter, the man repeated the crowing, and at the same time jumped on to a package and imitated the flapping, much to the additional enjoyment and merriment of his companions, one of whom rolled up a piece of rope-yarn and threw it at the assistant, hitting him on the cheek, whereupon the crowing was once more taken up.

But there was a slight miscalculation of their man this time ; he was not the weighed down, unresisting thing that a load of sorrow was making him, when, a while ago, he entered that place, and submitted to bullying, that he could make some allowance for under the pressure of duty. The old spirit was back, and the hot and fiery temper, held in check whilst under the dominancy of his arrogant master, could not be trifled with by any other ; and so, before his assailant was aware, he leaped over the bale, on the other side of which he stood, and dealt him a blow that sent him rolling over a cask of wine.

'Ullo ! 'ullo !' cried out all the men with one voice, as they rushed towards him,—'Ullo, young man, you've got into the wrong box to play them games,—by George, if you ain't, my covey ! Clinch him, Mike ! pitch into him, Joe !' and, leaping over the obstacles in his way, the one addressed as Joe, in advance of the rest, was about seizing him by the collar, when a blow from the assistant laid him sprawling over his companion, who just then was picking himself up, but whom this descent on him prostrated again.

'Now, who's next?' said the assistant, fairly on his mettle, as he looked towards the approaching support with clenched fists and teeth, and who very wisely halted on the other side of a pile of cases, where he was joined by the remaining warehouseman, and very speedily by the two who had just experienced so rude an evidence of Mr. Grumphy's prowess. 'Come on!' said the assistant, 'any one or all of you that haven't had enough.'

'Go on, Jack; you can lick him.'

But Jack evidently had his own opinion on that score, for he did not go on, but contented himself by remaining where he was, and from that secure position to hold a parley and make sundry demands (coupled with oaths), in which he expressed a great desire to be informed who he, Mr. Grumphy, was? and if he thought he were going to carry on them capers there? and that for a farden he'd knock him all to fits; together with a variety of other such useful information; but to all of which Mr. Grumphy only responded by the continued request 'to come on,' but with which, as no one showed any readiness to comply, or to proceed any further than with a threat that 'if he did not clear out o' that double quick, they'd precious soon make him,' Mr. Grumphy leisurely moved off, followed at a respectful distance by the men, who continued a round of chaffing, which he more than once put a sudden stop to by halting and showing a disposition to make for the nearest of his taunters, who thereupon invariably retreated to some cover, until, finally, as he emerged on the street and proceeded homewards, faint sounds of cock-a-doodle-do might be heard,—the subdued tone, however, seeming to intimate that, although every cock may crow on his own dung-hill, it is not always safe even then to crow too loudly or too braggartly.

Quite satisfied at the opportunity thus afforded of expending the surplus wrath that had been originally engendered against the surgeon, and, moderately, against himself, whilst musing in the cabin, Mr. Grumphy wended his way hurriedly along the sidewalk, still, however, unable to resist the exhilarating effect of the reaction of his spirits, as the frequent flappings and complacent smiles demonstrated, and which did not fail to attract the notice of passers-by.

It was not until the smack had dropped down the river with the tide beyond Woolwich, that Willie, awakened by the disturbance overhead in tacking and wearing the vessel, became gradually and painfully conscious that he was alone; but as the motion

coupled with the odour and closeness of the cabin, had already brought on the sensation of sea-sickness, he was unable to collect his thoughts sufficiently to a due realization of his abandonment, before he was, by the increasing rolling of the vessel, now in full sail, rendered too sick for further consideration thereof.

During his prostration, the old tar who rejoiced in the command of the small craft, attended him in a rough but kindly manner, and did the best he knew to cheer up his little passenger ; and on the second day, as the smack flew on before a fresh breeze, he carried him up on the deck, and, wrapping his watch-coat around him, endeavoured to interest him by simple yarns that were only half intelligible to the boy, from being related in technical language ; or, steadying him against the low bulwark, would point out the various objects along the coast within sight, and respond untiringly to his numerous questions.

It was not long before he became so completely engrossed in objects and sights so new to him, as almost to forget the scene through which he had passed. At times he was impressed with the boundless extent of the sea over which he was sailing, as he stood on the starboard side of the craft and gazed on the undulating plain studded with vessels of all sizes and rigs, sailing in every direction and under larger or smaller press of canvas. By and by, going over to the port side, as they entered the 'roads' or 'hugged' the shore, and glided past landscapes varied by villages, towns, outstretching fields or woodlands, the renewed wonderment of the young traveller was called forth, and he became absorbed in their contemplation, until, warned by the tall lighthouse, projecting far into the sea, of the neighbourhood of shallow water or treacherous sands, the crew wear the vessel round, and, as the coast recedes, far off he sees the swelling tide rushing to a jagged cluster of rocks, up which it bounds in boiling foam, and then falls back and retreats upon the retiring wave,—all which engages his rapt attention, until a fleet of colliers, with their stained fore and aft sheets, come lazily on, and pass to windward on their way to the metropolis.

All this, and much more, was so continually inviting his attention, that at night it was with difficulty he could be persuaded to cease watching the phosphorescent foam, as it sparkled and seethed around the vessel, and retire to his bunk.

Long before they reached their destination, Willie had experienced such a new life, that a complete turn was given to his thoughts and aspirations, and he entered into the incidents of the

voyage with such boyish zest, that the old salt, who had become much interested in him, declared he'd be a sailor yet ; and where-upon Willie set himself at once to learn the names of ropes, sails, masts, and several nautical terms, much to the approbation of the crew. But it had been fair weather and smooth sailing, or possibly he might have somewhat modified his views of a sea life. And as the wind had been variable, they did not reach the Tees before the end of the week, on the last morning of which they hauled alongside the wharf at Stockton, where, disembarking, the master conducted him to the inn at which he was in the habit of leaving the Kearas boys, and, taking leave with a hearty good will, and not without mutual regret, he commended him to the landlady as a clever lad, at the same time generously depositing Mr. Grumphy's half-crown in his trousers pocket, with the caution to let no one know he had it.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. PUDSEY HAS SLIGHT SUSPICIONS.

AT a very white table in the clean sanded room of the inn, at one end of which was a counter representing a 'bar,' Willie was quickly seated by the landlady, and doing justice to a breakfast consisting of thick slices of bread and butter, and a yellow mug full of fresh pure milk, his appetite much sharpened by his voyage. As the good woman poured some treacle out of a jar into a saucer, she bade him spread it on his bread and not spare it, as it might be some time before he would have a similar opportunity, adding, as she patted his head,—'Poor lad, I doubt there's a sorry day afore thee.' But this little proof of interest in the boy had the opposite effect to that intended, and instead of assisting him, arrested his further progress. The old feeling, already stirred up by his leave-taking of the sailor, was back in his throat and in his eyes, and he vainly struggled to keep it down; the kind-hearted woman was not slow in detecting it.

'Blessings on yer! Browt so early to them owd madlin school-measters; a bonny mither suarly she must be as ud part soa bonny a barn at soa tender an age.' But observing the tears dropping down on the table, she lifted the corner of her soft coloured apron, and, gently pulling back his head, wiped his eyes and kissed his cheeks; then looked over to the other side of the table, and addressed a hard-featured countryman seated thereat, habited in a strong coarse smock-frock and leather leggings, buttoned down to a pair of hob-nailed boots, who was just then fully occupied in disposing of a trencher of porridge, well garnished with treacle, to be followed by a rasher of bacon and potatoes, all to be washed down by a jug of ale by his side, 'real old Stockton,' once so famed, even in London, before Whitbread or Barclay disputed its superiority and drove it out of the market

'Wat ud ye be sayin', mistress?' said the countryman, whose attention the hostess had been unable to gain until he had cleared the passage for a response by an application to the jug.

'Why, I'm just sayin', Mr. Brady, she's a rare mither as ud trusten her wee led to tha Yorksheer measters.'

'Tha' mun say that, Mistress Pudsey; an' mony's th' time at's been a thowt to ma as aw've takken 'em doon. Them's fearfu' places; tho' them Kearasses, awm toud, ar' noa t' worst. Whar's ta bahn t', laddee?'

As Willie's education had not yet extended to the dialects of the English language, as a matter of course he had been innocent of any comprehension of the conversation thus going on between the two, and therefore quite unconscious that Mr. Brady had addressed him. Indeed he had, both during that person's disposal of his novel meal and the utterance of his equally novel words, been rapidly coming to the conclusion that he was a native of one of those islands that missionaries are sent to, and that he had heard of in Sunday school books and missionary tracts, sometimes brought over as samples, and some of whom, natives of the Sandwich Islands, had just then made their appearance in London.

Both Mrs. Pudsey and John Brady hailed from Yorkshire, and as a consequence their vernacular partook of the peculiar orthoepy and orthography of their native province, with the exception that the landlady, having earlier removed to the neighbouring county of Durham, had become less proficient in her 'native twang' than her friend John.

Perceiving that Willie was not aware of Mr. Brady having spoken to him, the landlady answered his question herself, and acquainted that individual with all she knew concerning him, which was not much; at the same time informed him that there were two other boys to arrive, and that the three would require to be well provided for in the crib or hinder part of his waggon, wherein travellers by that conveyance were usually accommodated. Upon learning this, Mr. Brady promised a good shake-down of fresh straw, and that the boys should have his special care during their conveyance to Barnard Castle.

As Willie had ceased eating, and Mrs. Pudsey was unable to prevail on him to finish the plate of bread and treacle, only half partaken of, she called her son, a lad of about twelve, and bid him 'take the wee boy out into the town and show him about;' adding many charges to take especial care of the little barn.

Whereupon Master Pudsey, proud of his task, introduced him to the sights, whatever they were, of that bustling, well-built, corporate town, not the least of which, in Willie's eyes, were the quantity of coal-laden gallows, mules, and donkeys congregated at Coal Hill.

At this period the thriving trade carried on at Stockton in lead, butter, bacon, and other articles, by coasters between London and various ports, rendered it a place of great resort. Its wharves and quays were thronged with vessels of varying tonnage, and of course formed one of the attractions to which Willie's cicerone directed his attention; but, not being much interested in trade or commerce, the young gentlemen mutually coincided in their preference for the aforesaid donkeys, which they as mutually regretted they were not seated on in place of the coal. But, added Master Pudsey, if he only came down at fair time, a little later, then he'd get the rides; and 'my!' weren't the shows great!—the pig-faced lady, the learned pig, and the giant and Tom Thumb! And if he only saw the clown! Here the young gentleman put himself into what he intended for a comic attitude, in imitation of the clown, and made some extraordinary wry faces, lolling out his tongue, turning his eyes up until they disappeared under the lids, and, placing his arms and legs in a Grimaldian position, until Willie began to feel uncomfortable, and entreated him to give over; whereupon Master Pudsey returned to his normal state. And then Willie ventured to inquire if his mother was going to put that queer man with a gown on, and that talked so funny, into a 'show?' Whereat the young gentleman became excited to such a degree of merriment, that it was some time before he recovered himself sufficiently to explain Mr. Brady's position and standing; and it was not till after repeated entreaties that he promised not to make his mother laugh too by telling her what he had said; which promise he was subsequently only deterred from breaking by the difficulty in obtaining a hearing from the bustling little woman.

Though of little import to the story, it may be stated for the information of the curious in personal records, that Mrs. Pudsey was a dapper, cheery little widow of about thirty, with no other incumbrance than the boy just introduced, if we except her interest in the old-established alehouse of which she was now sole mistress, and which was regarded in a favourable light by one or two admiring swains, although they could not

fail to be smitten with the jaunty, coquettish manner of the landlady, who was at no loss to display her rustic charms to advantage. A prettily-trimmed cap, with loose fly-away strings, rested lightly on the crown of her glossy, wavy black hair; her cheeks, glowing with colour, contrasted with her even, pearly teeth, which her rosy lips, slightly inclined to separate, displayed; her well-rounded shoulders were mistily seen through a thin gauze kerchief; whilst the tucked-up sleeves of a coloured dress exhibited a stout pair of arms, which, if not very white, were very plump and well-shaped, and terminated in a small wrist and hand; a short quilted petticoat permitted the sight of an equally small foot and ankle.

Having lighted his long clay pipe, that he took down from a couple of nails over the mantelpiece, Mr. Brady called for another mug of ale, which, after duly scoring behind the door, Mrs. Pudsey placed before him, and resumed her seat at the table. At the close of a few whiffs, Mr. Brady broke out with the remark,—

‘Aw’m capt at times, as aw ses to mysel’, Whar do them chaps do wi’ all them lods ‘at’s gettin’ doon t’ them schooilen housens?’ He paused, and looked over at the chalk marks behind the door, as though endeavouring to work out therefrom a solution to his perplexing thoughts; and then added, ‘Folk do say some things tha’s noa th’ ticket.’

‘I think mysel’ it’s not all reit. What do people say, John?’ said the inquisitive lady.

‘Wal, aw doan’t say’t, tha knoaws, Mistress Pudsey; bud fowk do.’

Thereat he shook his head, and resumed his pipe, which of course increased the lady’s desire to know what folk *did* say; but as the phlegmatic teamster appeared in no hurry to add any further information, she put the question again.

‘An’ what do people say?’ and, by way of dispelling any hesitation he might have in making a revelation, under the supposition of his possessing any confidential communication, she continued, ‘I’ve heerd some strange things too, John, mysel’;’ and she looked at him very mysteriously.

Mr. Brady took a long pull at the jug, shook his head, and turned round to the landlady, and said, with the same mysterious look, ‘Did tha ivver knoaw wun o’ them lods as cum’d back agen?’

‘Never, John,’ said the landlady emphatically, ‘that I can call on.’

‘Nur aw neither.’

He resumed his glance at the chalk marks, and smoked at a rapid rate, until almost lost behind the cloud, only emerging therefrom to ‘wet his clay,’ during which process he more than once looked at the hostess and shook his head, whereat the lady shook hers; but, being too impatient to bide the time of so ‘slow a coach,’ she whispered,—

‘An’ what *do* they do wi’ ’em, John?’

‘Aa—at’s wha’ aw ses,’ and the tantalizing Mr. Brady returned to his smoking.

‘Aren’t they all there still?’ asked Mrs. Pudsey. But there was no reply other than the ominous shake of the head, followed by the emptying of the jug. ‘What dost think they do wi’ ’em, Measter Brady?’ But that gentleman was so engaged in looking to the bottom of his empty jug, that he was oblivious to the inquiry. ‘Would thee like another sup of ale, John?’

This demand John was particularly quick in hearing and responding to, intimating that he didn’t care if he had a drop more. Thereupon the landlady retired to the barrel behind the counter, whilst John knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and blew through it, prior to refilling it with as heavy a charge of shag tobacco as his finger and thumb could force into the bowl; and as he once more puffed thereat, Mrs. Pudsey placed the foaming jug on the table, and reseated herself by the side of her sluggish customer.

‘What did tha say, John, they do wi’ them lods?’

‘Wha’ do they do wi’ ’em? Wal, noaboady knoaws bud theirsel.’

‘But what do thee think they do?’

‘Oh! wha’ do aw think? Aw doan’t think nowt,’ said the non-committal waggoner.

‘Well, what do folk say, man dear?’ said the persevering little widow, who, by the by, although she always persisted in asserting her intention to remain a widow, provided she was allowed to follow her own inclination, it was shrewdly surmised was finding that inclination somewhat interfered with by Mr. Brady; but if the latter was the aggressor, it must have been in a mode more intelligible to the lady herself than anybody else.

Drawing a little closer, and leaning her arms on the table, she looked archly into the waggoner’s face, and said in a half-reproachful tone, ‘What makes ye afraid to tell me, John?’

‘Oh,’ said John, moved by the tone and manner of the buxom

lady, as he looked into her face, into which she threw an expression that even his stolid nature was not insensible to. 'Wal, tha knoaws, Mistress Pudsey, aw'd tell tha onything;' and he looked rather quizzical.

'O yes, Measter Brady, I'm quite sure o' that; but—then why don't you?'

She brought her face a little nearer his,—a movement that made him feel quite strange, though he could not tell why.

'What did thee say, John, folk say they do wi' them lods?'

John laid down his pipe, and, influenced either by the extra quality as well as quantity of old Stockton that he had imbibed, or the fascinating persuasiveness of the insinuating little woman, hustled himself closer, and, looking around to make sure that they were alone, reached his mouth to her ear, and was about to whisper therein, when she laughed and drew back, and rubbed her cheek, and said 'his whiskers tickled;' then she laughed again, and so did Mr. Brady, which proceeding of course occasioned a temporary interruption to the intended communication; but it was soon overcome, and Mrs. Pudsey voluntarily presented her ear for the information sought to be so pleasantly communicated. But, admonished by his previous failure, Mr. Brady restrained his ardour, and made the announcement this time sufficiently remote to prevent his whiskers interfering; but as he concluded this necessitated his speaking in a louder tone, he made Mrs. Pudsey start as he sang out in sonorous tones, 'Done for!'

'Done for!' exclaimed Mrs. Pudsey, amazed, but unable to attach any special meaning to the words;—'done for! Oh, how dreadful! But how, John?'

She leaned her head towards him for a further impartation of his confidence, and laid her hand on his shoulder, which, had it been intentional, would have been unwise, as it rather disconcerted the waggoner, and scattered his thoughts, which were only restored as, looking naïvely into his large dull eyes, though not so dull as usual just then, she reiterated the words, 'Done for!' and then, dropping her voice, added, 'Alive?'

Mr. Brady looked wise, closed his eyes, unable to endure the brilliancy of Mrs. Pudsey's, and shook his head, though wherefore does not appear.

Unable to endure the shock of the implication thus made by herself, the agitated hostess had, unconsciously (perhaps) grasped Mr. Brady's hand, which she was holding on to very

firmly, awaiting any further communication or proceeding he might see proper to make or take.

Now, whatever direction Mr. Brady's feelings might have taken, but for the peculiar circumstances in which the denouement of his story found him, namely, with one hand tightly grasped by the excited landlady, as though she thought by this tangible contact with flesh and blood to calm her own perturbed nerves, it is quite certain he, probably as unconsciously as herself, squeezed Mrs. Pudsey's hand in return, which, being an unprecedented act on his part, instantly called a blush to the lady's cheeks, and at the same time two large patches of red on the same places in the waggoner's face, of which, however, neither was at the moment aware, as both were looking very intently at the mug, the hand-squeezing, meantime, spasmodically continuing.

How long they might have remained in this abstracted state, or how much further they might have proceeded, is a matter for conjecture, for just at the instant that John had begun to wonder what he was to do with the hand, or what was the *next* proper thing to do at all, and that Mrs. Pudsey herself was so palpitatingly anticipating the something *next*,—having had a prior experience of where such things led to,—they were interrupted by the outside door being flung open, and the entrance of no less a personage than Mr. Kearas, puffing and blowing, and leading a boy in each hand, one about ten and the other two years older, evidently brothers. They were dressed in new suits, in order that they might in a becoming manner make their first appearance at the Grumbleby Academy.

Mrs. Pudsey's ready appreciation of the proprieties brought her instantly to her feet, and in a most self-possessed manner she laid hold of the jug and desired to know if Mr. Brady had called for more ale. That gentleman, however, not being equal to the emergency, in a rather confused manner intimated that he did not remember that he had, but which a few minutes later he regretted. Thereupon the landlady, in an unembarrassed manner, turned and welcomed the worthy schoolmaster and his charge, but whose visit an hour later would have been better appreciated, as their premature arrival had probably interfered with what might have proved a crisis in the lives of the landlady and her customer; and this may be offered as some palliation for the unusual tartness in the former's subsequent behaviour to Mr. Kearas.

Of course, the situation being quite new to Mr. Brady, it took him a little time to recover, and get rid of a sheepish kind of look, and a sensation very much akin to that which is experienced on being detected in an act that don't look over well, which, as the waggoner sat examining his boots, was just how the transaction was presenting itself to his unsophisticated mind.

Without, however, affording any sign that he was conscious of anything more remarkable than ordinary about the room, Mr. Kearas approached the nearest bench and seated himself thereon. Being in his usual sudorific condition, he threw back his coat, unbuttoned his vest, and commenced wiping his face and neck, and fanned himself until he was sufficiently recovered to recognise Mrs. Pudsey, and address her in a broken guttural voice.

'Them's the boys, Mrs. Pudsey, that I told you about, and that's to be forwarded to Barnard Castle by the carrier; and he'll leave 'em at the inn till called for, which 'ull be directly they get there, so as there'll be no expense.'

'Dost hear, Measter Brady?' said the landlady, addressing the waggoner.

'Oh, is that you, Brady?—didn't see you. You'll take care and deliver 'em safe, an' I'll settle wi' ye at the inn.'

'Poor barns,' said the landlady, chafing under her disappointment, as she seated the boys and herself on the bench beside the waggoner, and took off their hats, and brushed the hair off their foreheads. 'Are ye's throo Lunnun, dears?'

'Yes, sir—yes, ma'am,' said the boys.

'Ha' ye a feyther and mither, pets?' said she, drawing the nearest close to her side.

'Yes, ma'am—yes, sir,' replied the boys, looking at each other with a slight quiver of the lips, and moistened eyes.

'In coorse they've a father and mother, Mrs. Pudsey. Do ye think I picked 'em off the street?'

'I dunno where tha picked 'em fro', measter, but I wod like to know what tha'rt goin' to do wi' 'em,' said Mrs. Pudsey, whose ruffled temper the schoolmaster's repartee had no tendency to allay, at the same time recalling the carrier's mysterious communication as to their destiny.

'Do with them, Mrs. Pudsey! What's done with all the lads that go to Grumbleby Hall,—that popular, well-known classical academy at Bowes, that everybody's sendin' their children to?'

'Ah,' said the little woman, with an emphasis, 'that's just what I want to know.'

'Then, marm,' said the schoolmaster, with a slight touch of irony, 'if after all these years you are ignorant, you are to be commissaryated.'

'Am I?' said the landlady, not comprehending what that meant, but suspicious that there was nothing flattering in it, and therefore more determined to pursue her inquiry. 'An' what's to be done with these boys? Are they to be done the same to?'

'There, marm, 's my prospectus, in which you will perceive that for the moderate charge of twenty pounds for common—that is, for plain—food, young gentlemen are boarded and eddicated in every apartment of the known history an' jography of the world, and other grammar exercises,—and genteelly done for.'

'Done for! That's it, John,' said the little woman, turning round, in a half-tone of triumph at having elicited this avowal, so corroborative of Mr. Brady's previous expression and information. 'Done for! That's what you said, John.'

'Oi, lass! didn't aw tell t' soa?' said Mr. Brady, who during the conversation had been returning to his ordinary state of mind.

'An' do ye mean to tell me out an' out that *you're* goin' to do for them lads down at yon Grummels, as tha ca't?'

'*I* goin' to do for them!' said the puzzled schoolmaster; 'who would if I didn't, I'd like to know?'

'Who'd know better than yoursel'?—mebbe t' owd woman.'

'Oh, ah! I see,' said the schoolmaster, giving a hearty chuckle at what he conceived was, after all, only intended for a bit of pleasantry. 'Of course Mrs. Kearas does for 'em, and she's the woman that knows how.'

'Mercy! hark at the owd sinner,' whispered the landlady across the boys to the carrier. 'How merry he is. He mud be one o' they fowk that them book men tell on as guttle childer as are fat.'

John stared at this view of the case, and then said 'Fat,' and nodded.

'Certainly,' said the pedagogue, who only caught John's response, 'fat as butter. You wouldn't know 'em again.'

'Do tha fatten 'em first?' remarked Mr. Brady, taking a part in the edifying conversation.

'Fatten 'em ! There aren't a boy that ever came down to the Kearas establishment, even if he were the living skeleton as is showed at the fairs, that don't get as fat as a pig afore we've finished him.'

'My, how dredfu' !' said the landlady, instinctively pressing the boy by her side close to her. 'Finish them !'

'Look at me, marm ! There's a spell, marm, about fat people entirely onresistible.'

Mr. Kearas reclined his head against the wall, and threw out his ponderous legs, and let his arms fall by his side, his open waistcoat affording an opportunity of judging the breadth of chest. He remained in that position sufficiently long to permit the challenged inspection, during which the scandalized Mrs. Pudsey was conjuring up the phantoms of half-a-dozen little fat boys hopping around the plethoric old man, who just then appeared translated into an enormous gnome.

Having thus, as he considered, duly impressed the landlady and waggoner, through the preponderating testimony of his own person, of the superior advantage of a sojourn at Grumbleby, and dispelled any lurking prejudice against the institution, he re-assumed an upright posture, and forthwith commenced what he had been purposing on his way to the inn, but which this unexpected conversation had delayed.

'Now, as you're a widow, Mrs. Pudsey.'

'My sakes !' said the little woman, with alarm.

'Allow me, Mrs. Pudsey, to suggest, as you're a widow, whether it wouldn't be to your advantage, and relieve ye of a great burden, if you just sent that boy of yourn along o' these down to my 'Cademy,—for, say, five or six years.'

'O mercy ! John, dost hear yon—my boy to be *done* for!—my wee Johnnie!—that's the very pictur-image, as ivvery body says as knows, of the dear departed Pudsey ; and all that I have now in the wide, wide world to comfort me.' She took up the corner of her apron and applied it to the corners of her eyes ; 'and I nothing but a poor lone young (emphasized) woman, young enough to have been only married now.' She looked round appealingly at John, who thereupon felt somewhat disturbed, and fidgeted about, until it occurred to him that from Mrs. Pudsey's look and manner he was expected to say something in her behalf ; so, lifting his eyes to the schoolmaster, who was contemplating the effect of his proposition, somewhat different to what he had anticipated, he said,—

'Aw say, maister,—coom nah,—noan o' that.'

'Oh, no offence, Mr. Brady; I only made the proposal.'

'Wal, tha oughn't 'ave made t' 'posal; shoo doan't loike that soart o' talk.'

'Then we'll say no more about it,—only she'll be sorry, Mr. Brady. You'll regret it, marm. Splendid opportunity to eddicate him along o' lads connected with fust families in England.' But as Mrs. Pudsey was immoveable, Mr. Kearas gave it up, and, after giving very circumstantial directions as to the care and disposal of the boys, together with the other, of whose arrival he was aware, having seen the master of the smack at the wharf, he departed to take the stage to Barnard Castle, preferring that mode of conveyance for himself,—not, however, without making one more effort to induce the landlady to change her mind, by offering to make her son a parlour boarder at the same price as charged for ordinary pupils, as a special favour.

'T'owd taistrel,' said the little woman, as he closed the door, 'if ivvery one finds his match, tha'lt get thine. There's men, John, as ud think nowt o' making same out o' their own moppits.'

Before John had time to express his sentiments, Willie and the landlady's son entered by the back door, having wound up their morning's sight-seeing by an inspection of the waggon team in the stables. The latter was about reciting the morning's adventures, when his eye fell on the two boys seated on the bench, and, being a forward boy, it was not long before he made himself acquainted with them, and soon the four became intimate; which they had ample opportunity of doing, as the waggoner retired to the yard to fodder his horses, and Mrs. Pudsey's attention was now called to customers, who, as the day advanced, began to come in apace.

As the night closed in, the boys were sent early to bed, in order to their being better able to rise at daylight, at which time the waggoner was to start,—not, however, before the two last comers were put through an examination by the landlady, whose curiosity was gratified on ascertaining that they lived in the neighbourhood of Ratcliff, which must have been additionally satisfactory to learn, seeing she had never been to London; that their parents carried on business there; and that they had two younger brothers, who in all probability would in due time take advantage of the splendid inducements held out by the Grumbleby institution.

Whilst all are thus consigned to balmy sleep, and to dream

perchance of Elysian delights in store, we will linger behind awhile to note some particulars that may prepare us better than the dreamers for the possible realities awaiting their introduction to classic ground. Though somewhat anticipatory, this seems needful to a correct appreciation of the scenes with which we are soon to become familiar,—the more necessary, as being left untouched in the interview between the surgeon and the principal,—the idiosyncrasy of the establishment was not sufficiently apparent, indeed, was not likely to be brought prominently to light, it being more to the advantage of such institutions that they should remain in the shade, and be tacitly understood rather than revealed.

Something after the mode practised in Mr. Hawkes' office, as well as by other conveyancers, in regard to real estates, these small *personal* possessions were usually consigned to the principals of those northern seats of learning for a *term of years*, which embraced a very valuable consideration, the ignoring of all holidays,—a feature peculiar to these academies,—offering thereby the saving of any additional expense in travelling to and from their homes, as well as the cost of living whilst there. This was undoubtedly regarded as a special recommendation by parents and guardians, who, likewise spared the pain of frequent leave-taking on return of their boys to school after vacation, became so enamoured of the plan, that they were often induced to extend the term, on its expiration, to a still further number of years.

This arrangement at first view appears rather one-sided, offering advantages to the assignors without affording corresponding compensation to the assignees ; on the contrary, imposing a *gratuitous* burden upon them, in the maintenance, often of from seventy to one hundred boys, for two or three months in the year from which other schools at Christmas and midsummer were relieved. Doubtless the authorities were not indifferent to this, and, other things being equal, would have preferred to waive this speciality ; and, in common with their unfortunate charge, they duly fretted over it, although in the matter of fretting the preference must be awarded the latter, who undoubtedly experienced the emotion to a more pungent degree, the more so as the fact of their deprivation was not suffered to pass unnoticed, for, whilst *enjoying* the holiday on the premises, they were required twice a year, as the season came round, to recall the occurrence by way of imparting a keenness to their said enjoyment.

The special mode in which these refreshing reminders were made, was by the half-yearly specimens of composition and penmanship which Mr. Kearas undertook to convey to their anxious friends on the occasion of his semi-annual visits to town in search of other exiles, awaiting deportation from equally attached guardians. These artistic productions expatiated so strongly on the ever-augmenting attachment between pupils and teachers, that it would have been little short of Vandalism to have attempted to separate so united a family, and consequently it was rarely attempted; all of which, however, will be more apparent as the story proceeds.

Still, it is only right to record that there were not wanting certain detractors who combated the favourable view in which these establishments were held, arising in some cases from experience; but as the avowal of any such experience might lead to unpleasant expositions, and even carry with it an implied admission of a certain amount of complicity, such persons were generally reticent, only speaking in inuendoes, and leaving others to purchase their experience on the same—at times expensive—terms as they had done; and so the institutions continued to prosper.

There was, however, one anomaly unaccountable if the prestige claimed for them was indisputable, that rarely did a boy, once recalled from his expatriation, and whose friends were not actuated by sinister motives, ever return to these terrestrial paradises,—not that he was debarred therefrom by any wrathful schoolmaster, indignant at such an unjustifiable innovation, but that the ingrate, obtaining the ear of his friends and an acquaintance with the outside world, exhibited invariably a depraved taste by giving a preponderating preference to the world without. This will account for the peculiarity of the *term of years* and no vacations, that on their first presentation appeared so one-sided, and also afforded a potent argument why the boys should remain until attaining all the advantages attainable out of the schools, or the schools out of them.

It must be conceded that, even allowing for the altered times, these institutions, to use a more modern phrase, were *run* at a very small charge; and, looking back with our knowledge of the facts, it does seem a little strange that those who availed themselves of the low terms, should have done so with their eyes shut, and that they seriously believed that the education promised, with board, clothing, and the host of etceteras, blazoned forth periodic-

ally in the public prints, could by any possibility be afforded for so small an equivalent. Shall we charitably opine that, captivated by the glowing terms in which these Eldorados were described, parents and others hastened in such numbers to commit their offspring or wards to those celestial mansions, under the hallucination that the millennium would thereby be the sooner ushered in, as the young Puritans, emerging from these Elysiums, spread over the land? Some, possibly, were allured by terms that offered them the cheap boast that their boys were being educated at a classical academy, and were deluded into the expectation that their dolts would return Solomons. But our incredulity compels us to believe that the majority thought nothing of the kind, the impelling motive being the extradition of little incumbrances claiming undesirable relationship. To such, these institutions offered a facility that was eagerly availed ; and with an avidity quite exhilarating to witness, and that presented the managers in the light of public benefactors, they abandoned their little surplus waifs to their especial guardianship. Fated to know no other endearments than the rude hug of these human ogres, whom it is no wonder they came to resemble, they were eventually disposed of as some fortuitous opening or happy chance might offer, of course to the advantage of the generation upon whom they were let loose.

But in all seriousness, shocked as the good world was, some forty years since, at the revelations made, when the lens was brought to bear on these dark corners of the land, had such places only lately come into existence? and with the partial light reflected on them, unable to endure the few reflected rays, they slunk away again to be accounted amongst the things that were. Rather, did not these sequestered infirmaries meet a demand as old as the unequal strife of sin and holiness. The disease is chronic, and, however repressed for a time, is not cured. Latent in the system, it awaits only the counter-irritant to evidence itself anew, as proved by successive eruptions on the body economic, each bearing the same affinity to the old complaint, and which, though cauterized or excised, and temporarily skinned over, reappear with greater virulence. Doctored, poulticed, pharmaciéd, the cuticle reassumes a healthy phase. Charmed by the result, we set to work and re-bronze the defaced image, and then, placing it on its pedestal, insist on its restoration to pristine purity, ourselves the first to do homage to the enamelled ideal ; whilst synchronously and covertly the gangrene

is reappearing here and there, until indications, too palpable to be longer ignored, compel us to recognise the morbid original in the newer type of 'infant nursing,' or 'baby farming,' or some other equally repulsive form, whose uncleanness has created the greater nausea, only because its putrescence, in closer proximity, has become more perceptible to our olfactories. To the fountain with the healing wood, or the bitter waters will be bitter still.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STOCKTON EXPRESS AND THREE LITTLE TRAVELLERS.

A WAKENED from their heavy slumbers by the lusty shouts and shakings of the landlady, the three boys managed to drag themselves out of bed by daybreak, and, after assisting each other to dress, descended to the homely meal that awaited them. During the progress thereof, they were somewhat interested in observing the celerity with which young Master Pudsey disposed of a bowl of porridge and milk, the operation being quite new to the three other boys, but not destined to long continue so.

In the meantime, Mr. Brady, having commenced earlier, and got through a more substantial breakfast, in part consisting of rashers of bacon, emblazoned with fried eggs and potatoes and onions, the whole washed down by potations of his favourite Stockton, that he much preferred to Mrs. Pudsey's Souchong, he went out to the yard to his still earlier attended horses, who, having concluded their feed, he brought out by pairs, and attached to the conveyance, a ponderous double-shafted, heavy-laden waggon, each of whose double tired wheels, fastened with large angle-headed nails, might have served for a garden roller; the vehicle itself was roofed over with strong ashen hoops, covered with a canvas tilt. Assisted by 'Lijah, the man-of-all-work at the inn, everything was soon in readiness; and, after a careful inspection of his four stout, large-framed, and broad-shouldered horses, harnessed with the heaviest and strongest of gear, he took the foremost near one by the head, and, turning to the hinder one, cracked his supple whip, and addressed each by name, as he shouted, 'W-o-a thear, Prince!—Lady!—Coom 'ether, Diamond! Gee oop, Dandy!' The sudden plunging of the splendid team thus addressed at first resembled the sharp cracking of a *feu-de-joie*, and sent the earth, mingled with sparks, flying in all dire-

tions ; then, rocking with its load, and bumping over the paving-stones, horses and waggon rushed out of the arched gateway on to the street, and halted before the door of the inn.

As this was an achievement that usually attracted the notice of such as were thus early passing, Mr. Brady was always sensible of its importance ; and on its being performed, as it generally was, to his satisfaction, he commenced patting and holding a short conversation with the sturdy beasts, who, by the snorting and champering of bits and waving of heads, appeared to perfectly comprehend this recognition of their particular merits.

At the conclusion, the lookers-on having dispersed, Mr. Brady thrust his whip into a socket by the side of the vehicle, and commenced one or two abortive attempts to raise his heavy frame on to the shafts, extra weighted by his thick hobnailed boots,* the sight whereof called forth the admiration of the three boys. Finally accomplishing this feat, he stood on the shafts, catching and piling away a number of packages of different sizes and shapes, for which room had been specially reserved in front, and that 'Lijah threw up to him from a hand-truck that had just arrived from the wharf at which Willie had disembarked, and which packages consisted of hampers, brown paper parcels, small boxes, and even diminutive hand-baskets, each labelled with cards or wooden tickets, or marked on the package itself, bearing the name of certain 'masters' at Mr. Kearas' Academy, Grumbleby Hall, near Stockton, or Durham, or Newcastle, or some other place equally remote, demonstrating that there was some difference of opinion as to the exact locality ; whilst most of the packages, especially the baskets, were identical in one part of the address, having thereon, in readable and unreadable letters, 'This side up, with care ;' which probably accounted for their being so roughly handled and pitched about, without any care or reference to the side to be placed upwards, that being the side in most cases placed the contrary way,—it not being customary for wharfingers, waggoners, or carriers in general, to submit to directions from outsiders as to the particular position in which packages were to be arranged. Indeed, had they done so, it would have necessitated the construction of very peculiar conveyances. As a consequence, they duly resented any ex-postulation that such inattention to instructions provoked, and that ordinarily resulted in pots of marmalade, jars of honey, and other unctions being distributed amongst the remaining contents of the packages, and thereby, on the completion of the

journey, manipulated into some new and nameless compounds. Moreover, writing, to the majority of such persons, was a cabalistic character that they knew ought to be on each package, but as to deciphering it, ignorance was bliss.

Having finished the stowing away of these Grumbleby parcels, John next turned his attention to safely piling away the boys' trunks, and then cautiously lowered himself down, after which he placed a short ladder against the hinder part of the waggon, and bade the boys 'Git oop an' leg doan;' whereupon, having been aided in their effort by the sympathizing hostess and 'Lijah, they were soon safely housed, and, taking a condoling farewell, she prayed the Lord's mercy on what she conceived three more little victims on their way to the altar of Grumbleby Hall, on which it would have been impossible to have convinced her they would not, some fatal morning, be offered up to appease the cravings of the insatiable ghouls or vampires, who there fattened on such dainty morsels. Though, with reference to the description of entities named, it is not presumed Mrs. Pudsey had any knowledge of such, she being better posted up in the more popular histories of Blue Beard of wife-killing fame, or the giant that possessed such a gustatory regard for Tom Thumb and his brethren; in all of which traditions, as handed down by her parental instructors, she was carefully taught, and as duly transmitted to her own son and heir, in order to his proficiency in universal history, and who rewarded her solicitude by showing greater aptitude for this species of literature than for any other, adding thereto from extraneous sources others equally marvellous.

Having seen all ready, and hooked the reins on to the top of the inside of the waggon, Mr. Brady suddenly disappeared within the door of the inn to transact a little personal matter on the other side thereof; whence, after the lapse of a few minutes, he reappeared, followed by Mrs. Pudsey, wiping his lips on the cuffs of his smock, the wiping probably a sequence of having imbibed his accustomed draught, or indulged in *something* as exhilarating,—the latter idea suggested by the coincidence of the lady also wiping her lips,—or, more probable still, Mr. Brady had partaken of both.

After a few monitory directions as to himself and the boys, on the part of the landlady, John prepared for a start, and, taking down his elastic-handled whip, gave a couple of resounding smacks, accompanying them by shouting as before the names of his horses, who thereupon, tightening the traces, made a

desperate plunge, and dragged the shaking, clattering vehicle through the town, which gradually receded from view as they got fairly on their way to Barnard Castle *via* Darlington.

Had this mode of conveyance existed in these days, it would no doubt have been dignified by the very intelligible appellation of express,—Barry's Lightning Express,—the idea being more in the signification of the designation, than in the thing signified ; but as the designation had not come into such general use as at present, it had no such attractive name, and the proprietor was content to be known by the distinctive title of '*the carrier*,' the painted board on the side of the entrance to Mrs. Pudsey's yard indicating that goods were forwarded by his team to Darlington and Barnard Castle from Stockton, and that passengers could be booked at the inn. The accommodation for these latter was at the hinder part of the waggon, where a small space was left unoccupied by goods, strewn with straw, wherein the insides—there were no outsides—could sit or recline when tired of walking.

By the time the rumbling, jolting vehicle was clear of Stockton, and crawling and groaning over the deep ruts on the high road, the sun was well up, casting his active rays over the grassy meads and cultivated fields. The birds and the flowers, respondent to his invigorating beams, were carolling or opening out their petals along the fields and hedges, whilst the flocks and the herds were spreading along the pastures, cropping their morning meal, ere the increasing heat compelled them to retire to the shade of the sheltering trees or hedgerows.

The waggoner, tired of his lonely walk, and recalling to mind that there were live chattels in his conveyance, dropped to the hinder part thereof, and, hailing the boys, demanded if they would not prefer to get out and walk awhile ; whereat the three leaped up with delight, they having been under the delusion that, like the rest of the baggage, they were to remain where they had been deposited until delivered to their owners.

Lifted out in turn, they entered into the novelties of the scene around with a zest that called many a broad grin into the carrier's face, and evoked even words that showed he had not forgotten that he too had been a boy. Running, leaping, tumbling, laughing, and shouting, they sported along, as careless and thoughtless as the young lambs in the fields around them, forgetful of the past, and as little thinking of the future : here clambering up a bank to gather an early blue-bell ; now coursing

along the meadow, till, suddenly arrested by the rose-coloured petals of a ragged robin that still lingered behind its mates, they hastily gathered it; again off to the opposite hedge, hooked down a half-faded branch of white hawthorn; whilst another added to his stock from the redundant crimson-tipped daisy or golden king-cup; then racing back to the carrier with their treasures, watched whilst, dividing them into four parts, he stuck them into the head-gear of each of his horses, who by their nodding seemed to appreciate their master's attention.

Once more away! They are paddling in the brooklet, that, after running a few yards along the road, now crosses it diagonally under a wooden bridge, at one end of which they lean over to watch the floating bits of wood or weeds thrown in on the other side, as they come swiftly along, and descend with the stream into the field through which it takes its course; but as they raise their heads to follow, they are attracted by a painted butterfly, and are off, hats in hand, leaping and falling over clumps and mounds, that afford the insect the advantage to disappear over a bush, and end the chase. No matter; they're off again, and now it's a race, and who'll first reach the bottom of the hill, arrived at which, breathless and panting, as they gaze around, the youngest of the two points to a distant object moving along the field, and calls to the others to look.

'Look! why, don't you know what that is?' cries the eldest, as he prepares for a jump;—'O you gumps, it's a calf!'

'Calf!' said Willie, as he shaded his eyes and looked towards the object pointed out, and then clapped his hands,—'Calf! —you're a calf!' whereupon he laughed heartily, joined by the younger.

'Well, what is it, now?' exclaimed the elder.

'Why, it's a goose!' and the other two went off anew into a merry chuckle.

Thereupon all three ran off to appeal to the carrier for his verdict in the case, but some new object attracting, it is forgotten, and on their reaching him he proposes a race to the milestone in sight, and ranges them in line. After one or two false starts, he gives the signal, 'One—two—three—and off!' and now they are panting along the dusty road, with the emulation that incites the children of a larger growth; and as each in turn gains upon the elder, he increases his speed, or, failing to do so, seizes his eager competitor and pushes him aside, despite the remonstrance of that not being fair. The stone reached,

the victor mounts thereon, and waves his hat, notwithstanding the mutual protests of the other two, and which is to be again a matter of reference to the carrier when he comes up. But just then, hark! from the village beyond, mellowed by distance, comes floating on the stilly air the sound of church bells. Startled into silence, they listen; awakened feelings steal over them, and with each faint clang comes back some thought of home and friends. The vision grows dim, and the objects around are blurred, and neither dares trust himself to speak, until, after a brief space, Willie, in a whisper, unconscious of any incongruity, asks if it is not St. Martin's; whilst the younger, in quivering voice, suggests perhaps it is St. Paul's.

But the waggoner has overtaken them, and their rising sorrow is quickly dissipated by his good-natured laugh and timely raillery; and forthwith he addresses them in language that, as heretofore, bewilders, and occasions repeated side looks at each other, until, unable longer to repress their risibilities, they run to the other side of the waggon, and join in a hearty laugh at 'the funny talk.'

By this time they have arrived at their first watering-place, the wayside inn, where also some parcels have to be delivered, and where, according to custom, Mr. Brady indulges in his usual jokes with the buxom lass that brings him out the foaming mug of ale. But, not one whit behind, and smart at repartee, she plies him with the usual parrying inquiries, and 'particularly wants to know how Mistress Pudsey was when he *last* saw her;' and winks, and informs him, in confidence, that she hears 'it's going to be next month,' and then laughs heartily at his sheepishness; and then, as her merriment has failed to elicit any corresponding laugh, it being too grave a matter in Mr. Brady's estimation to be made the subject of mirth, she resolves into a more serious state. But as though not deeming so grave a view as applicable to any other than himself, Mr. Brady shakes his head, takes off his hat, and withdraws his handkerchief from the inside, then wipes his head and forehead, and, giving a wink, ventures to ask 'how Jurdy wur,' and which seems to have a contrary effect to that produced on the waggoner, for the young lady evidently enjoys it, and threatens to pinch his ears, and, after a few feints of punishing those articles, retires with the empty mug to attend a thirsty pedestrian.

Meanwhile, well satisfied with himself at the result of his 'tit for tat,' John turns the heads of the fore horses to the trough,

into which he has pumped the water, whilst the hinder pair take their quota out of the pail that he holds to their heads ; and soon the effect is seen in the distention of their reeking sides. During these proceedings the boys had looked on, all eyes and ears, to learn how horses drink, and men and women talk in tongue unknown.

Once more they resumed their journey, and the waggon jogged on its dusty way, the boys with some abatement of animal spirit, only because even the elasticity of youth is not proof against continued action, and the accelerated exhaustion of the odylic fluid demanded rest, until the accumulation of a fresh supply restored its wonted exuberance. As they lagged behind to slake their thirst at a passing rill, they began to feel the gnawings of hunger, and wondered when they would get anything to eat, but just at that moment became aware that the carrier had halted his team on one side of the road, and, hastening on, found he had thrown down from his waggon a large armful of hay, which he was sharing equally between his horses. After this he drew a canvas bag from the same receptacle, and, calling the boys to his side, bid them be seated on the bank, upon which he deposited the contents, bidding them 'hoap theirsels,' but, seeing their diffidence, cut off a good hunk of bread and cheese for each as well as himself, and encouraged them by his own example to fall to, as they must be hungry, and they'd 'get nowt moar till neet.'

The invitation required no repetition, and soon all were well engaged. One part of the programme, however, they were not asked to join in, but, from their observation of Mr. Brady's manner, they came to the conclusion that, at least to him, it was not the least enjoyable of the entertainment, for every now and again he applied the mouth of a brownish earthenware bottle to his lips, and, taking a long swig of its contents, at each withdrawal smacked his lips with great heartiness, at the same time advising the boys to look out for a drink at the first stream they came to, which caused them to express their surprise to each other that he did not do the same, and not carry water in a bottle.

The sun was now lengthening the shadows towards the east, and a breeze that had sprung up as they resumed their plodding way, was fast freshening into a blow, hurrying in its course detached, vapoury-looking clouds ; whereat the twittering swallow flew lower along the ground, and the insects chirruped in concert

with the lowing cattle who wended their way to trees and hedges.

The waggoner intimated to the boys that they were going to have a wet night, and advised them to retire to their shelter within the waggon; and, as he deposited them therein, he closed the canvas well over the opening, and then mounted his gallop-way, and rode by the side of the wearied horses. It was not long before the slowly-descending drops were succeeded by a heavy pour, and, leaving the little animal to follow at the rear, he climbed up to the front, and ensconced himself under the sheltering canvas, where he was soon rocked to sleep by the jolting of the vehicle, as the steady old team plodded on their way, guided alone by their instincts.

Too excited by the morning's adventures to speedily follow the example of the carrier, the lads interested one another by the recital of the part each had taken therein, recalling certain portions that had more or less affected them, and recounting them, much after the fashion of older heads, with such embellishments as occasionally astonished the participants therein, who had not seen with their playfellow's eyes nor heard with his ears. The tendency to amplification commences with our earliest days, just where it might be expected, wanting the moderating influence of riper experience. Everything then, as it presents itself under the charm of novelty, is curious or wonderful, and though time and each day's association with the actual or the marvellous gradually render so familiar the strange things that first affected us, and transmutes them into commonplace ordinaries, yet, as the longest life cannot exhaust the role of wonders, we are still prone, untaught by experience, to the same exaggerations, whether orally expressed, or in the calmer, less excusable emanations of the study.

The rain now came down in torrents, and the sky, covered as with a shroud, rendered the closing night one of inky darkness. The boys had crept closer, and spoke in lower tones and less frequently, until their whispers no longer broke the silence, and each was busied with his own thoughts. Then came back unbidden, as they ever do in our lone, drearier moments, the whilom forgotten ones, and the times and the places so precious; and soon the reproducing memories were saddening the hearts just now so hilarious. It was not long before the intensified feelings found utterance, and the two younger boys were sobbing in unison as they lay with their little arms clasped around each other's neck.

'I want to go home, Willie,—don't you?' whispered the small boy, in stifled tones.

'Yes, I do. Can't we go if we like?'

'Let's tell the man,' said the boy.

'O yes, do,' said Willie. 'I don't want to go any further.'

'What are you making that noise about?' said the elder lad, with an effort at composure, and impressed with a vague idea that, being the oldest, it devolved on him to act the man, and repress any unpleasant demonstration; especially as it was not unlikely, under the very similar state of feeling towards which he too was being impelled, he might be carried to a like excess.

At that moment a flash of lightning lit up their retreat, followed by a loud clap of thunder and an extra outpour of rain that deafened every other sound, and cowed the three into a suspension of conversation, causing them to withdraw their thoughts from their painful retrospect, and to huddle together in alarm, as flash and clap and rain-pour succeeded each other; in the midst of which a loud hallooing was heard, followed by the stoppage of the waggon, and in another instant they were startled by one side of the hanging canvas being pulled aside, and a stentorian voice shouting,—

'Lods, lods! ha' tha seen t' golloway?'

Too much alarmed to recognise the voice of the carrier, they made no response, and, muttering to himself, the man withdrew, but could be heard calling something as his voice died away. They had not long remained in this state of trepidation before they heard a slender neighing, followed by a voice they soon identified as the waggoner's, calling out in a coaxing tone to his missing galloway, which had lingered behind under the foliage of a tree, and whose responsive neighs told he was making his way to the waggoner, who was presently heard fastening the little animal to the tail of the vehicle, upon the completion whereof the conveyance was once more in motion; and as the storm had blown over, the boys became more composed.

In less than fifteen minutes another halt took place, and then came the sound of men's voices, flickering of lamps, rattling of chains, and heavy tramp of loose horses. Before the boys were able to come to any conclusion as to this fresh cause of interruption, the waggoner drew aside their canvas covering, and, holding up his lantern, called lustily to them to get up and descend from their nest; on complying with which they found they were at the stopping place for the night, a small inn on the outskirt of

Darlington, into which they were directed to enter and await his coming.

The door, to which with some hesitancy they made their way, opened into a room that, like most country wayside inns, served all the purposes of tap, parlour, eating, and at times sleeping, room.

The room itself was not encumbered with any superfluous articles of furniture, the well-sanded floor being garnished with the usual quantity of angular sawdusted spittoons, and a few rush-bottom chairs ranged along the walls, whilst a long, strong-framed, two-inch pine-board table stretched across the centre. On the side on which the door opened stood a huge armed box-bench, inside of which was the bedding intended to be used when required to turn the said bench into a bedstead. A glaring coloured print or two hung against the walls, and a few clay pipes, belonging to regular customers, were suspended on nails over the chimney-piece. The bar was formed by battening off one corner of the room, behind which were the barrels and kegs, and a few bottles, glasses, mugs, and jugs.

The strong heavy smell, as the boys entered, indicated that but a short time had elapsed since the convivial frequenters of the inn had retired; but the room was now empty, and, as they stood within the door, hesitating whether to advance further, the warmth of a blazing fire on the hearth enticed them onwards, aided, too, by the attraction of a large sirloin of beef roasting before it, whose savoury smell created very pleasant sensations. In the pan underneath was a batter or Yorkshire pudding, on which, as the gravy dropped, and formed brownish little pools, the famished lads simultaneously feasted their eyes and regaled their noses, anticipating the relish that awaited them, but whose appetites needed no such provocatives to stimulate them. After a short silence, relieved by more than one sigh, a gradual survey was taken of the room, the further end of which, however, was scarcely discernible by the flickering blaze of the fire.

‘I wonder if that’s for supper,’ at length whispered one of the boys, eyeing the joint wistfully as it went spinning round on the spit. Looking towards the table, they saw it was laid with plates, knives, forks, and other appliances, that seemed to affirm that it was.

‘I s’pose that’s instead of dinner and tea,’ said the big boy.

‘Wouldn’t you like a taste of that pudding?’ said the little one, in a tone that seemed to imply that he would.

'I wish they'd make haste!' said Willie, gaping, partly from weariness, and partly from an involuntary impulse, occasioned by the irritating fumes, and which action was supplemented by the others; after which another fond regard was taken at the meat, and then at the pudding. Five minutes more elapsed, still no signs of any one making their appearance. Matters were becoming critical.

'I wonder how it tastes,' said the little fellow.

'There wouldn't be any harm in just trying with the tip of one's finger, would there?' said the big boy.

'I'm afraid there would,' said Willie, somewhat reluctantly.

'Why, what harm could it do?'

'A great deal,—it isn't ours.'

'Well, but I daresay it's for us, and I'm sure it wouldn't hurt.' As he uttered this his finger was nervously working around the inside edge of the pan, but instantly withdrawn with an exclamation of 'Oh!' and an immediate application of his digit to his mouth to stay the pain.

'Now mind,' said Willie, 'that serves you right.'

'Oh, it didn't hurt,' said the other, who by this enforced application to his mouth had experienced a sensation so delicious, that he was unable to further resist, and before the other two could recover their alarm, had thrust his two fingers into the corner of the tin dish, and, despite the scorching, conveyed the luscious morsel to his mouth, the meanwhile making terrible grimaces from the effects thereof. Scarcely, however, had it reached his lips, before the three were electrified by the sound of a voice issuing apparently from the wall at the further end of the room, and exclaiming, 'Plenty! plenty! put it back again.'

The little boy leaped in consternation to the side of Willie, who had stepped round to the bigger boy in the attitude of raising his hands in deprecation of the act, in which position he stood transfixed; whilst the culprit, with distended jaws, from which the succulent morsel was ejected, stood trembling, as he stared at the other two, and then, slightly inclining his head in the direction from which the voice proceeded, pointed in dismay to an object projecting from the wall.

As they followed the direction of his finger, whilst they slunk closer to him, their eyes fell upon what, in the dim light, appeared to be a huge night-cap, with an extensive border, and an enormous high crown rising far above a very broad bandage of a flaming red colour, but which, as they continued to gaze

with terror, gradually receded until it was no longer visible, disappearing through the wall whence it issued.

Before they had time to recover, the outer door opened, and, to their great relief, the waggoner and host, accompanied by another man, entered. Taking the candle out of his lantern, the landlord placed it in a socket on the table, and it was not many minutes before the whole, including the boys, were making a hearty meal, during the disposal of which the latter forgot their recent fright.

At the close, the waggoner and the two men lit their pipes, and, after a few pulls thereat, retired for the night, the boys being first deposited in the waggon, with the horse-cloths for an extra covering, under which they crept with renewed trepidation, whilst Mr. Brady returned to the inn, to occupy the bed lounge alluded to.

The day had hardly broken before they were roused and called in to breakfast, at the conclusion of which, their courage having returned with the daylight, they reconnoitred the room, to ascertain, if possible, the wherefore of their previous night's terror, and discovered the door of a recess slightly ajar, whence could be heard a breathing sound as of some one asleep, from whence they concluded the voice that had alarmed them had proceeded.

After disposing of such portion of the load as was intended for Darlington, and replacing the vacant space with goods for Barnard Castle, the original Stockton express was once more wending its way through the town, though as yet too early to become known to the major portion of the Darlingtonians. Here and there, however, a group of weavers hurried by on their way to the mills on the river Kern, who interchanged their accustomed salutations with the waggoner, with whom they had become familiar by the regularity of his appearance, whilst an occasional knot would pause to comment on the powerful mottled horses, and compare them with the lighter and swifter bays of the London and Berwick stage, that stopped and changed horses at the post-town of Darlington; which town, verging on 250 miles from the metropolis, was of no mean account, alike celebrated for its manufacture of huckabacks and other fine linens, and its superior bleaching waters, and, moreover, just then attracting additional notice from having introduced and put into operation a newly-invented flax-spinning machine, as also the still more astounding inception of a mode of travelling without horses.

The heavy rain had rendered the unpaved streets rather muddy, but, on leaving the town, as they gradually lost sight of the high tower of the beautiful church of St. Cuthbert, a name often recurring in the north, the sun broke out in unclouded radiance, and quickly dried up the beaten road. A light, soft breeze sprang up, and came over the smiling fields, sweetened and perfumed by the mingled odours rising from the myriad revived flowers, blossoms, and scented grasses that lay in its course, and that stretched for miles through verdant plains, teeming with animal life. The hedgerows still sparkled with dewdrops, not yet all absorbed by the heating atmosphere.

‘Coom on, lods. Ded ar’ tel’t tha yon’s “Hell Kettles”?’

‘What’s he say?’ said the eldest boy, as, with his companions, he ran to the side of the waggoner, and looked round in the direction pointed out by the carrier’s whip.

‘Aw say, ded tha niver hear tell o’t’ Hell Kettles at Oxenhall?’

‘Kettles—a—tock—sen—all,’ repeated the boys after one another.

‘What’s he mean?—I don’t see any kettles.’

‘Waur’s ta ben all t’loife? t’arn’t mooch tha knaws ev tha’ doan’t knoaw that?’

‘What is it, then?’ chimed in all the boys at once,—‘tell us.’

‘Wal, ta sees, thur lived in thay parts’—

‘What parts?—Who lived?—Show us!’ said the boys in a breath.

‘Oop yonner,’ pointing again in the same direction—‘theer lived a rum owd chap ’at soam sed was a moank, an’ soam sed wur a friaar.’

‘What’s a monk?—what’s a friar?’ exclaimed the boys, whose curiosity was awakened, as they walked close by his side.

‘Friaar!—whoy, a friaar be loike,—a friaar’s one o’ thay soart o’ chap’s ’at’—he thrust his fingers under his hat and tried to scratch up an idea, but it would not come, and so he added, ‘Wole, danged ev aw rightly knaws; bud tha ca’d them friaars, aw knaws ’at.’

‘Well, what then?’ said one of the boys; ‘did the monkey fry in a kettle?—go on and tell us.’

‘Wal, aw could noa tell’t nah, it ud wund ma, bud aw’ll do’t when we stop to tak’ a snack.’

‘Oh, ah! so do,’ said the boys, clapping their hands with glee in the anticipation of hearing a first-rate story, and then ran off to the ditch, but quickly returned, and demanded, ‘What’s it about?’

'Nah, doan't be soa fashus,—roon abaht.'

'But say, is it about giants?' said the younger lad.

'Well, ghosts then?' said the elder.

'Be off nah,' said the waggoner, raising his whip under pretence of hitting them, whereat they all dispersed, and he cracked it after them, and thereby caused his horses to start at a quicker pace. But, unable to endure the suspense, they every now and again returned from their sports to propose some new inquiry that they imagined might afford a clue to the nature of the tale, but all of which was stoutly evaded.

'Isn't it time now?' said Willie, as he came up and slid his soft hand into Mr. Brady's hard fist. 'Is it about fairies?' said the big boy.

'I know! It's a monkey and a kettle,' exclaimed the small boy.

'Get oot o' that!' said the inflexible waggoner, again chasing them as they decamped; and as he returned to his team they cried after him, laughing and dodging, 'Is it about monkeys? Is it about kettles?'

Never was a longer morning, nor feeding-time so slow in coming round; but at last the midday sun announced the longed-for time had arrived, and, drawing the waggon to one side as before, after attending to his cattle, they all sat down on a sloping bank on the other side of the hedge, and went through the same performance as on the previous day, including Mr. Brady's solitary application to the earthenware bottle, after which he buckled the nosebags on to the horses' heads, and returned to his impatient auditory.

'Now, mister, begin, won't you?'

'Oi, bud tha mun try an' noa tawk;' whereupon he re-seated himself, whilst the boys gathered close around him.

During the relation, not the least amusing part was the countenances of the puzzled boys, whose painful efforts to comprehend the strange language in which it was told, caused them frequently to disregard the prohibition not to talk, and to submit the good temper of Mr. Brady to a severe test, by the multiplicity of requests for some more comprehensible mode of communication, and which at times brought a threat of discontinuance, whereat a renewed promise was given of silence, which for a time was observed, contenting themselves by asking each other's assistance in a whisper, until, unable to restrain, he was once more interrupted by a host of requests for explanations.

As the reader may not hail from the same classic region as Mr. Brady, and in that case be equally as unlearned as the three young travellers in the Doric of those parts, it has been considered wise to obtain a translation of the tale into the modern vernacular or Hellenistic,—a not very easy task, and in doing which it need not be stated, as in all such efforts, divested of its dialectic peculiarities, it is also shorn of much of its *beauty* and *force*. But with such abatements the tale runs thus :—

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LEGEND OF HELL KETTLES.

HUNDREDS of years ago, in the year one thousand one hundred and seventy-nine,—but before we say any more we must say something else,—it was an eventful year that year of grace. A general Lateran council, under the pontificate of Alexander of Rome, had again fulminated the thunders of the Church against heresy, which was cropping up on all sides,—too late, however, to overtake one Peter Waldo, on whom it had its eye; no way to be regretted by said Peter, for though since held in blessed memory, he was just then in no very good repute, having for some time been under the ban of mother Church as recusant, and foremost amongst the promoters of novelties, but which he had the audacity to avow were no novelties at all, but as old as ‘the Book’ from which he professed to cull them, and on whose authority he dared to put them forth in opposition to councils; and, to add to such contumacy, after being ‘hunted like a partridge on the tops of the mountains,’ he in this very year ’79 ungraciously avoided the toils of his pursuers, by a further flight from that portion of the land in which he had taken refuge, and known as Bohemia, to the Paradise above,—and this, as affirmed by his followers, without stopping on his way at the penal fires, to which he had been so mercifully consigned by said mother Church, or even previously undergoing the purifying process that awaited him at her hands. All of which was an aggravation of his offence, since, lying under the ban of the hierarchy, he should have previously obtained a dispensation, without which he could have exhibited no rightful authority for admission to that region. But then it is only right to state that this view of his case was indignantly repudiated, as it would have argued a want of concert between the powers below and the powers above, or rather beneath, seeing the document demanding his presence had cited him in the name of the devil,

into whose domain it must therefore be presumed he had gone, to put in an appearance.

Henry the Second of England, the most able prince of his time, was in this same year conducting himself toward the hierarchy in very marked contrast to the above-mentioned pervert, so exceedingly below him in earthly estate. He had felt good some years prior on kissing the pontiff's foot, and subsequently sitting humbly before him on the floor of the Abbey of Bourg-Dieu; but latterly had been exceedingly naughty in that unfortunate matter of Thomas of Canterbury, and had only, after most persistent efforts and humiliating penitence, and confession before the relics of the saints, been restored to apostolic favour. A short time, however, had only elapsed since this notable event, which might have been deemed sufficient to have obtained for him a plenary immunity, when he encountered new troubles, arising from a secular source, and thereupon found it advisable once more to make atonement for the same offence, but this time to the manes of the dead. So, on his return from France, he hurried off to Canterbury, on coming in sight of which he dismounted, and walked barefoot to prostrate himself before à Becket's shrine; and there and then, after sundry goodly exercises, like a naughty gentleman as he was, underwent a wholesome castigation on his bare shoulders, from the gentles who resided at that most hospitable and Christian place. All of which must have been very satisfactory and enjoyable to all parties concerned, and is commended for imitation on all occasions of war, since it is asserted as matter of history, that on that self-same day his generals obtained a great victory over the Scots, with whom his aforesaid troubles arose, and which success was unquestionably the result of the flagellation. There would, however, arise this difficulty in these days,—who should undergo the exhilarating exercise?—whether the Secretary of State for war, in unison with the Lords of the Admiralty, or that it should be distributed amongst the ministry generally? The only drawback suggesting itself in such case, is the great tenacity to office that might ensue at such critical times.

However, matters were pretty bad just *then*, and Henry, notwithstanding his laudable submission, had his hands full. War in France, invasion by Scots, fights in Ireland, crusaders off to Palestine, pilgrimages by the hundreds of thousands to Becket's shrine, and dark deeds and marvels everywhere. The Church was in the ascendant!

In those Elysian days, then, in the year of *grace* one thousand one hundred and seventy-nine (we are where we began), one early morning, as an old theowa or thrall, a live chattel of the feu or manor of which he was part and parcel, was crossing the fields at Oxenhall, near the foot of a hill, he espied advancing towards him a figure habited in coarse dark sackcloth, a rope tied around his waist, and a staff in his left hand. His hood drawn over his head screened his face from view, but his garment was not so long as to prevent the observation that he was not barefoot, as usual with his order. Now, beyond paying the accustomed reverent salute, and obtaining in response the wonted benediction, the thrall would have passed on without further note, since monks were no scarcity in the patrimony of Saint Cuthbert in these most religious days, but that on raising himself after his obeisance, he could not for the life of him tell what had become of the cowed saint, and though he rubbed his eyes again and again to obtain greater clearness of vision, the process availed him nothing. He looked on this side and on that, before and behind, above and below, but not the sign of a monk could he see, and at length very sagely concluded he had not seen one, but that it was Saint Cuthbert himself from Lindisfern, out for a morning's airing; and so, crossing himself most devoutly, he hastened to the village, where he recounted to the astonished socmen, ceorls, and thralls the fact of the mysterious apparition. He had scarcely concluded the relation, when an esna, as thralls were also termed, rushed up to the marvelling crowd, and informed them that, whilst crossing the same field, he had encountered a figure in every respect similar to the one seen by the first narrator, with the exception that the garment was much the colour of the hempen cloth then worn, and that, as in the former instance, it had as suddenly and strangely disappeared.

After each had expressed his own peculiar opinion, which was not very dissimilar the one from the other, it is not a matter of surprise that the conclusion reached was the very proper one, that no one knew who it was, or what it wanted, or what it meant, further than that some new trouble was brewing, in which they could not be far astray, considering the state of the times, as before hinted at.

It, however, resulted in one effect, that thenceforth every one, from the meanest thrall to the free socman, when occasion required him to cross the field, invariably afforded ample space

for the undisturbed rambles of the eccentric dissolving apparition, which must have been perfectly satisfactory to the party concerned, as it is not recorded that he made a third appearance, notwithstanding such reappearance was duly challenged by some thirty of the brave defenders of the body of St. Cuthbert, called halwerkers, specially deputed from Durham for that purpose, and who, to the great admiration of the Oxenhall villeins, in broad daylight marched across the field at a respectful distance from the hill, and then marched back again, and thereupon returned to the ancient city to report the issue, and that they had restored all to its normal quietude.

That was all very well ; but though the ghost of the *monk* might have been exorcised by this valiant attitude on the part of the halwerkers, matters were not to be so *quietly* settled down ; and accordingly, some weeks after, another thrall, coming home at dusk from the hostelry, after a day's attendance on the knight of the shire at hawking, revived the fading story, and caused a greater consternation than before, by the report that a strange figure, on a blood-red steed, with sword in one hand and the arms of the bishopric on his breast, had ridden rapidly past him, and disappeared as suddenly, in the same locality as the monk.

Time passed on, and the field was abandoned to the cattle, who grazed over it without let or hindrance, save that now and again a sheep was missing, and more than once an ox failed to return to its owner ; but this was in no wise an unusual occurrence, their loss being easily accounted for by their straying away into the dense, tangled woods, or to their more probable abstraction by the predatory bands, known as the 'thirma,' that abounded in the country in those troublous time. But though the socmen and others ceased to cross over the place, yet, as it lay in the direction of some of their homes, and they were obliged to pass it, although at a wide range, there were not wanting some to assert that they had heard strange noises in the direction of the hills.

The landlord of the hostelry or alehouse, a more privileged place then than its name would now imply, was rather an oddity in his line, for, whilst ordinarily encouraging the drinking propensities of his customers, he would at times most unceremoniously, and without previous warning, turn them all out at a very early hour of the night, bidding them get to their homes as speedily as possible, adding some new tale in connection with the

mysterious field that caused them to hurry by that locality at even a greater distance than usual. More than one sturdy vassal had ventured to complain of this treatment to the manorial baron ; but this soon ceased, as such were invariably turned off without redress, accounted for by some wiser socman, in the whispered assertion that the landlord paid his danegelts and other feudal dues in coin, a rare article in days when cattle and produce were the ordinary circulating medium, and when not only barons, but even sovereigns, were wont to hold moveable courts throughout their demesnes, in order to *eat up* the homage and socage *tales* that could not otherwise be collected and transported to the distant capital. So that payments in coin were a great desideratum both to knight and his superior baron, to whom in turn *he* owed fealty ; and, in addition to the prestige acquired with his superior, the possession of such rare medium of commercial exchange enabled him to farm the revenue of the shire at considerable advantage to himself.

But how came the hosteller to be able so readily to pay, and liberally, too, in a shape that he did not receive from one of his customers ? This was a perplexing problem that the sagest order of vassals or villeins was unable to solve. But there were not wanting sage old Saxon dames in those days, any more than in the present, who knew a thing or two, and found no difficulty in accounting for the milk—and rich milk it was—in the cocoa-nut ; and a rumour soon got abroad, not to the advantage of master hosteller, and which did not lose any of its acrimony because circulated after the don't-tell-anybody fashion. And now it was that, their memories refreshed by the said old dames, they recalled certain suspicious stories that were formerly afloat to the prejudice of Master Hugh Eling, the innkeeper, but which he had at the time temporarily allayed by presenting himself, on citation, at the first court leet or barony held there-after, and, as a liege vassal, in presence of his co-villeins, thrown himself on his knees, and placed his hand between those of his territorial lord, and sworn fealty, and paid his amerciements and fines with no niggardly hand,—all of which was deemed quite satisfactory, at least to the parties most interested ; but, being a hated Norman, and speaking a language forced on them by their conquerors, his Saxon neighbours were not so easily quieted, and needed but little provocation to revive the old tale.

But the seasons passed along, and a more than usually severe winter set in, necessitating the more frequent renewal of the

crackling faggot and huge logs on the spacious hearth, around which the stalwart Saxon yeomen gathered, either at their rude homes, or around the blazing fire at the hostelry, to discuss some tale of Danish deed, or more recent feat of daring Norseman, whose extra enormity had caused it to travel beyond its own local limits. But now a fresh tale had been started, and was, when out of hearing of their host, becoming circulated. It was affirmed that smoke had been seen by more than one, when hieing to his hut at night, curling up the sides of the hill; and even lights had been observed, and figures as strange and stranger than those encountered in the fields, had flitted to and fro, until it was maintained they had been seen to fly swiftly through the air, though without wings or brooms to aid in such excursions. At length one more highly favoured than the rest was indulged with a still greater revelation: just as he arrived opposite the proscribed hills, at the distance of nearly a league, he witnessed the illumination of the whole background; in the foreground of which a host of grim-looking urchins began a merry prodding game, thrusting at one another with little three-pronged forks, and pitching balls of fire at each other's heads, but which, caught on the tips of their tongues, disappeared down their throats, followed by an appreciative patting of the abdomen. Then ensued the performance of a horizontal serpentine movement backwards and forwards, until, twining around each other, they suddenly changed into wheels of fire, when, the whole uniting in this revolving catherine wheel display, they exploded; and thereupon a total darkness ensued, and the night's performance was concluded, much to the benefit of the wife and family of the indulged thrall, who, although thenceforth the favoured guest as well as hero of the neighbourhood, was never known again to prolong his stay at the inn until so late an hour.

Whatever such exaggerated stories might imply,—quite, however, accordant to the superstitions of the times, when no marvel could exceed popular credence,—such extravaganza could not fail eventually to reach the ears of the good Abbot of Lindisfern, who thereupon despatched a special messenger to inquire into these irregularities, no permission for which had been obtained or *doled* for. The return of the messenger, not empty handed, satisfied the scruples of the jealous abbot on these points, as well as calmed the apprehensions of the brotherhood, who were led to understand that it was nothing more than Friar Uthred

having recourse to a few extra expedients to reclaim the somewhat lapsed villeins of Oxenhall.

One evening at dusk, two travellers, habited in long dark cloth cloaks, dismounted at the door of the hostelry, and led their over-ridden steeds into the shed at the rear of the building, where, without removing their trappings, they proceeded to fodder and rub them down with a whip of hay. Unloosening a couple of heavy sacks that had been strapped at the back of the saddles, but concealed during their ride by their long cloaks, they returned to the inn, and, having ascertained that there was no person save the host within, entered the inner room. The emptiness of the rooms is accounted for by the already-stated device of the landlord, who, despite the remonstrances of the villeins, had that evening driven them homewards before twilight had ceased.

A large log threw its warmth and its light over the apartment, the smoke escaping from the aperture in the roof.

'A hard ride,' said the first man in Norman-French, as on entering he threw his sack on the floor, and in which proceeding he was followed by the other as he entered, attended by the hosteller; 'but I think we've outwitted them again;'—a slight smile passed over his hard features.

'By which road did you come, Ulric de Veaux?' said the innkeeper.

'We ran our boat before light this morning past Sonderland, landed at a lone spot on the Were banks, and laid there until our horses arrived, then started about cock-crow across the country, keeping shy as much as possible of the highway,' responded Eric Fitzwalter, the other traveller; 'but we have brave hungry paunches, good Master Eling, and our tongues won't wag till they're oiled.'

'Right said,' responded the hosteller as he left the room, but in a minute after returned with a fat leg of mutton on a wooden tray, and in another minute with a large loaf of rye-wheaten bread, accompanied by an urn-shaped vessel of baked pottery, and three drinking goblets of the same earthen material, all of which, having been set before the famished men, he proceeded to fill the goblets with Flemish wine dipped out of the urn; whereupon the three drank to one another and friends around the welkin, not forgetting their old friend the Abbot of Lindisfern; after which they drew a couple of three-legged stools to the

heavy bench that served for table, and, drawing a two-edged short weapon from their belts, helped themselves in a manner that verified the statement of their appetites having been sharpened by their long ride.

'And were the lazy Benedicts of St. Peter's at Weremouth asleep?' said Hugh Eling, considering he was now justified in resuming his inquiries.

'Not they,' said Ulric, who appeared to be the leader of the two, if not of the three, 'or we had not been here, for the taxmen had caught sight of our boat before we entered the river, and were in full chevy, but we feinted and dodged among the inlets, and they lost us for a time; but we were again in danger from the "water passagers" at Goncaster, who were afoot hunting for their quarry, but Friar Uthred of St. Peter's was far down the river near where we landed, waiting with our horses, so, scuttling the boat, we mounted and sped to the hills, where we kept under cover till the coast was clear for a fresh start.'

'We have promised a good silver censer, or the price thereof, to the holy brother for that help,' said Eric, by way of reminder.

'Ay,' said Ulric, 'when we are well through; but from what Skirlaw told us, who came up to us before we left the hills, the commissioners' boat had reached Dunholme, and bishop and abbot, the latter of whom had taken passage in the boat, had been closeted together, and were suddenly off to Auckland, which bodes no good to us.'

'Not if they find our track,' said Fitzwalter.

'By the shrine of St. Cuthbert,' said Ulric, at the mention of which the other two crossed themselves, 'it would ill star us in that case; we will have to make speed with our oblatas, and make the Friar of Dunholme our friend.'

'Thirty marks of silver at least, I fear,' said Fitzwalter, with a sigh.

'We must go further than that,' said Ulric: 'the bishop will have to be doled too, and his guerdon will make light sacks. The curse of St. Cuthbert on those passagers!' As he uttered these words, he lowered his voice and looked cautiously around, and again demanded if the premises were free of taverners; then rose and close-barred the wooden shutters, and drew the tapestry carefully together, that the light or the sound of their voices might not attract any wayfarer. Hugh Eling threw an extra log at the back of the hearth, and stirred up the crackling embers, that sent a fresh glow through the room; after which he

removed the fragments of their meal, and returned to learn further particulars of the late adventure of his two *confrères*.

'A Lombardy horse and two robes of a good holy shade to his grace the earl-bishop,' said the landlord, taking up the conversation from where it had been left.

'By my troth but thou'lt make a poke of the sack,' exclaimed Fitzwalter, repeating the sigh.

'Tut,' said Ulric, 'we have a good cow up in yonder hills.'

'But we must not let these hedgehogs milk her dry,' said Fitzwalter, 'be she ever so good.'

'No fear, no fear,' said De Veaux. 'Cheer up! you're too down-hearted, Eric. Look at these precious tokens ;' and thereupon he approached the hearth, dragging the two sacks with him, and, after bestowing a few blows on the burning logs with a large stick standing in the corner, whereby a greater blaze was produced, he seated himself on the floor, the other two following suite, and, untying the mouths of the sacks, emptied their contents in front of the fireplace, causing the eyes of his comrades to flash with delight as the silver marks rolled in a heap on the stone flags. 'See those kurbled thrimsas,' continued Ulric, as he rapidly pushed aside a lot of those coins, and then looked into the faces of his friends, whose countenances told the magical effect. 'A fistful of these would purchase a king's letter of request, much less a bishop's,' and he rattled the pieces against one another. 'But my lord bishop, as Earl of Northumberland, is king here.'

'Ay, ay! and, like his good brother, Harry of England, can be bought.'

'Hush,' said the more timid Eric, not certain, judging by former experiences, that walls had not ears for any aspersion on the good fame of the potent bishop.

'Didn't Geoffrey de Neville give him three Flemish caps and a hundred lampreys and two hawks, to say nothing about the ranche on his brother Ordgar's cattle?' said the reckless Ulric, not at all affected by the other's caution; and then, as though to inspire him with his own spirit,—'What if the whole pack of passagers and taxmen were on us?—isn't here enough twice told to baulk their scent, and to send them back as Guslet and De Cundet sent back the mareschal and seneschal with their whole retinue!' and he raised some of the shining metal in both his hands, and let it pour down on the heap with a clanging sound.

'I grant you ; but you forget the penance. I fear lest some day we may not get off without that, and by St. Oswald I've no

liking for it;’ and he twisted himself as though undergoing in imagination some flagellant application.

‘Would they were all at the bottom of the Were,’ chimed in Hugh Eling in a subdued tone.

‘So say I,’ said De Veaux; ‘they’re a goodly set with their talliages and money dues.’

‘By St. Nicholas, better pay talliage, though, than that!’ said Eling, holding up his left arm, which showed a handless stump.

‘Pish!’ said Ulric, ‘a trifle.’

‘If you think so,’ said Eling, ‘try it.’

‘’Twas an evil day that, mine host,’ said Eric Fitzwalter, whose sympathies were quite in accord with Master Hugh’s.

‘’Twas well it was not your caput,’ said Ulric, by way of consolation. ‘You’ll not ranche again so close to royal Henry’s hawks. He carries out his laws against our trade too royally.’ (Three years previously, Henry the Second had enacted a law whereby robbers, coiners, and others were condemned to lose a right hand or foot, or both, and it was evident that the landlord had been amongst the earliest to suffer the penalty.) ‘Keep at a safer distance, and give your valuable services to the patrimony of St. Cuthbert, over which so right good a palatinate rules, or it may be a were-gild next.’

‘I’m afraid there’s little choice,’ said Fitzwalter. ‘It was otherwise once; but now the place is so overrun by cows and hoods, and a host of such wolfish prowlers, that the King’s hawks even are less vigilant.’

‘There you’re not far astray,’ remarked Ulric more thoughtfully. Then, resuming his nonchalant air, he added, ‘But friars and monks are not insensible to the value of thrimsas and marks, any more than barons or knights, or Hugh Eling himself,’ said he with a chuckle. ‘But come, a truce to such thoughts! Refill the bags, and let’s hie to our nests.’ And thereupon the three restored the coin to the sacks, and, directing Eling to open the vault door, that individual raised the flag-stone upon which the money had just been lying, and the two sacks were flung in, the stone being relaid and carefully raked over with ashes from the hearth.

From a corner of the room the landlord now drew a bundle of dried grass, which he spread along one side of the apartment for the two guests to repose on, being the staple in those days that supplied the place of feathers or spring mattresses for vassal or baron, the only difference being in the selection of a

superior article for the sovereign and nobles, composed of gal-
lium and woodruff and other sweet-smelling dried herbs and
grasses, covered with cloths of rich embroidery and fine texture,
—such grasses being one mode of payment of commutages.
Upon this couch, without divesting themselves of any article of
clothing, or loss of time, extended at full length, lay the pseudo
knight and friar,—for it may as well be stated here that it was
none other than these two worthies who, in such guise, aided by
mine host Hugh Eling, had played those merry pranks in the
neighbouring fields, with the object of deterring the superstitious
thralls and ceorls from intruding on their haunts in the hills, to
which the spoil was usually conveyed for safety, and that other-
wise, as they were in the habit of roaming over them in search
of their cattle, as well as on other occasions, might have been
discovered. Tired out by the excessive excitement and fatigue
of the last few days, in a few seconds they were both in a sound
sleep, testified to by the alternate snoring kept up by the wearied
men, who were to be off to the hills before daybreak.

The night was stormy, and the snow, which had commenced
falling just as they arrived at the inn, now lay to the depth of
some inches; the keen wind howled around the staunch stone-
built premises, and, whistling through the crevices, deposited
thin drifts of snow within the door and window shutters, and it
soon became impossible to detect any sound without.

Now and again the innkeeper, as he sat before the hearth,
with the double purpose of keeping watch and attending to
the fire, was startled by the sudden gusts of wind that shook
the doors and shutters, but, quickly reassured, he resumed his
interrupted musings. The storm now increased to a gale, and,
satisfied that no one would venture out such a night, he gradu-
ally ceased to attend to the turmoil without, and, yielding to the
influence of the drowsy heat, was presently in as heavy a
slumber as his guests, and adding another note in variation of
the sustained concert of noses.

He had not succumbed more than twenty minutes, by which
time the storm had begun to abate, when a loud noise awoke the
three men simultaneously, and, starting to their feet, they looked
anxiously at each other for an explanation.

‘The storm is still fierce,’ said Hugh, the first to speak, as
though to convey the impression that he had not ceased to
watch.

‘Was it the storm?’ said Ulric; but before the question

could be answered, the noise was repeated with increased violence, followed by shouts and voices loudly demanding admittance.

Not a moment was to be lost: the discerning ears of the men told them the bishop's officers were upon their track, and that any hope in resistance was vain. Seizing their cloaks and hats, and gathering the grass hastily into the corner, the two travellers rushed into the outer room, at the door of which the knocking was continued, with angry threats, and, raising the broad hearth-stone, therein disappeared. The landlord replaced the flag, scattered some ashes thereon, hurried to the door, and, as he unbarred it, mechanically rubbed his eyes, and assumed a dull, sleepy look, but which quickly disappeared as he found himself confronted by no less a personage than the Abbot of St. Peter's, accompanied by the seneschal and other officials.

Dropping on his knees, with bowed head and crossed arms, he tremblingly awaited the issue; but without heeding him further than to order his seizure by two of the attendants, the abbot passed quickly into the adjoining room, followed by his retainers, some of whom, having lit their torches at the smouldering embers, commenced a search under benches and around the apartment, and returned to do the same at the outer room, the door of which was guarded by an officer to prevent any egress, whilst others mounted into the loft or attic under the roof; but the search was fruitless.

Having sheltered and duly attended to their palfreys in the outhouses, the *posse comitatus* assembled in the inner room of the hostelry, where, by the light of their torches and an addition to the fire, they commenced a judicial examination of the viands and wines and other beverages contained in the well-plenished larder of mine host, all of which, according to the good and wholesome custom of those religious times, were at the service of the saints, whose name in those days was legion.

At the conclusion of the repast; so heartily *done justice* to as to preclude the necessity of any clearance of fragments, the gracious abbot proceeded to *do justice* to the quondam owner of said edibles, whose gratuitous cheer had so well contributed towards the ability to make an impartial investigation. To this end the hosteller was summoned before the abbot, as he sat toasting his toes at the blazing hearth, where he was duly examined, and required to make oath on his knees before the cross, that he was innocent of all and sundry the charges, real

and imaginary, wherewith he stood charged by report or otherwise, and that he had not harboured or succoured, now or at any time, derelicts in general, or the two notorious suspects in particular, whose misdemeanours and unwarrantable essays at defrauding the revenues of the earl-bishop, by clandestine importations, in connection with others beyond the seas, and of a consequence beyond the reach of the said earl-bishop, who was also lord high admiral of that portion of the seas that laved the coasts of his palatinate, had rendered them amenable to the outraged fiscal laws, all of which, and as much more, the honest Eling felt little scruple in swearing to, having ever before him his maimed limb urging him to hesitate at nothing that might guarantee the retention of the other hand. As it seemed unlikely that any further information could be gained that evening, the abbot ordered the dried grass to be spread over the floor, a further quantity being thrown down from the loft, and soon the whole retinue were asleep, including the innkeeper, who was permitted to repose between his two guards.

As the morning dawned, a cold biting wind drifted the snow into heaps against the fences and buildings, and as the abbot and his retainers looked out on the sharp wintry scene, they appeared inclined to delay their departure to a later hour, and were on the point of re-entering the inner room with the intention of doing so, when a halwerkman, who had been reconnoitring around the premises, came with breathless haste into the presence of the abbot, and, throwing himself on his knees, announced that traces of men's feet and horses' hoofs had been discovered on the other side of the inn. Instantly a rush was made to the spot indicated, where, though somewhat obliterated by the drifting wind, the impress of the feet both of men and horses was discernible.

It was not long before every man had resumed his cloak and weapons, and, some mounted and others on foot, were in pursuit of the presumed fugitives. For a short distance the outline of the horses' hoofs was discernible, and then became lost, covered over or carried off by the wind on the more exposed land. Two men were then sent in advance to examine carefully, as they spread along the supposed route, but were returning unsuccessful, when a cry from one, who had gone to look over a sheltering hedge, intimated the trail was again found. Immediately all made towards the place, and followed the lead of the discoverer. Presently it was found to make a *détour*, and, descending a slope,

came to a broad ditch, on the other side of which was a high fence; here the snow, though deep, was much tramped, as though an effort had been made to force the horses to leap, but, not succeeding, they had ridden along the side, until, reaching a more inviting spot, they had cleared ditch and fence, and taken the open field, but wherein the marks were again lost. After awaiting a diligent search throughout the field by the footmen, the horsemen set off in another direction, but, having ridden some distance, returned and rejoined the rest. A consultation as to their next course was held, and various suggestions made, but none approved.

In the midst of this dilemma, the seneschal, who had been reconnoitring in another place, came riding up, and informed the abbot of the strange stories regarding the hill in the adjoining field, which one of the villeins, many of whom by this time had collected to watch the novel cavalcade, had just recounted to him. 'To the hill!' was echoed around; and soon horsemen and footmen were vying with each other who should first reach the goal indicated.

Arrived in its sheltered neighbourhood, the marks again reappeared, and in a few seconds shouts proclaimed that a discovery had been made. Tumultuously hastening to the place, two horses were found in a cave, well littered with straw, and apparently but lately foddered.

Whilst all were engaged in their comments on this timely disclosure, one of the escort caught sight of the tracks of men's feet, and, beckoning to two other halwerkers at a short distance, he followed them up until they led him to a second cave. The mouth was narrow and gloomy, and he hesitated to enter, but, perceiving the two men coming rapidly up, he dashed in, and, turning a sharp angle, before he had time to bring down his uplifted weapon, found himself in the iron grasp of a stalwart foe, the next moment disarmed and dragged far into the interior, and threatened with instant death if he uttered a sound. By this time the two others had reached the entrance, and, detecting the noise of scuffling within, levelled their pikes and advanced; but, on reaching the angle, two heavy, rapid blows shivered their weapons, and they turned and fled, in their flight causing a panic amongst the villeins, who by this time had gathered in large numbers, and who thereupon, under the full conviction that their old friends the ogres were upon them, turned tail, and, in the utmost trepidation, scampered pell-mell over the fields.

It was not many seconds before the bishop's officers were at the mouth of the cave, and, disposing his men so as to prevent any escape, the seneschal entered with two or three of the stoutest, each with lighted torches and raised halberds, cautiously scanning every nook and corner; the two foremost had scarcely turned the angle ere they were violently hurled back upon the rest, and in the *mêlée* Ulric de Veaux and Eric Fitzwalter, with the desperation of baited tigers, dashed past them, and, rushing upon the troop without, had almost cut their way through them, when a blow from behind felled Ulric to the earth, and thereupon the less courageous Eric surrendered, and both, bound with strong hempen cords, and strongly guarded, were brought before the abbot on their return to the inn, where they underwent a rigid examination, interlarded with promises of mercy on confession; but the quality of such promises was too well understood to be of any avail in inducing what would only have resulted in their more ready conviction and punishment. As nothing could be elicited regarding themselves or their treasure, they were handed over to the seneschal, and by him and his armed band escorted to Raby Castle, the said castle being a fief of the church of Durham, or Dunholme, as named by the Saxons, but now by the Normans styled Duresme, and held by the Nevilles for the annual rent of four pounds and a stag,—a noble structure, but probably not so extensive a building as it subsequently became.

They were not slow in dispensing justice, or what answered for that commodity in those days, the dragging process being a more modern invention; so in a few days a courier arrived at Darlington, then, though a ward town, little more than a large straggling village, with the requisite authority from the earl-bishop to convene a court to be attended by all knights and burgesses of the vicinity, and which was duly proclaimed in the surrounding hamlets and towns.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LEGEND OF HELL KETTLES—*concluded.*

IT was Christmas eve, and the old baronial hall of the Nevilles, which on such festivals was wont to resound with the revelry of rough though lordly guests, even prior to the days of the merciless Canute, by whom the bochold thereof had been bestowed on the Church, was now surrendered to graver use. The trial of the criminals was about to take place, and Raby Castle for once looked grim and stern at Christmas-tide, though a glance round its walls betokened such transformation had not been anticipated. The glare of the resin torches, whose inodorous fumes curled and rose above the heads of the bishop's servitors as they moved along the spacious court, fell upon the boughs of the holly tree, plentifully loaded with berries, that decorated the tapestried walls, shaped into various devices, and interspersed with laurel, cherry, and bays, the bane of enchanters, wizards, and others of that ilk, and preservatives against the more appreciable effects of lightning. Entwined with evergreens, of varied name and shade, were long strips of dyed cloth of bright colour; whilst from the roof were suspended chains of brass and even gold, to the last links of which were attached the emblematic doves. From others, again, stretched in loops from side to side, depended banners and shields, with mottoes in Saxon or Norman; and from the centre of the hall hung a huge mistletoe, or several boughs thereof united into one.

The warmth and light arising from the famed yule logs, of which the capacious room required more than one to counteract the cold air that entered through the numerous unglazed apertures, were augmented by the large faggots of lighter wood continually heaped upon them; and the strong irregular flashes imparted an unearthly alternation of glare and shadow, occasioning remoter objects to blend in fantastic or hideous shape.

At one end of the hall, on the dais covered with embroidered cloth, sat such of the Capites, whether barons, knights, or other notables, who had been summoned to take part in the trial ; on the outer edge stood their halberdiers, armed with long pole-axes, and habited in their distinctive uniforms. In the centre, a little in advance, and under a canopy, sat the high sheriff, who on this occasion had been nominated to the exalted position of deputy vice-admiral, in which office he represented the palatine lord, and presided over the secular side of the court, the criminals being adjudged to this jurisdiction as having entered the palatinate from the high seas. On one side, a few inches lower, sat the marechal, in command of the retainers who lined the interior of the building ; the seneschal, as convener of the court, being seated on the other side of the sheriff.

At a short distance, on a low seat in the centre of the building, and facing the magnates aforesaid, sat the *humble* abbot, too heavenly-minded to be associated with the administration of secular law, but potent in its application for all that ; for though, in deference to the merciful canons of the Church, his powerful ecclesiastical superior the earl-bishop was precluded from being present at inquisition of blood, yet, as the bishop's vicar, he was there to attemper such inquisition in its action and decision ; his presence so prominently before them testifying the Church's desire for mercy, but which would have been more probable to have resulted had he been *absent*,—especially as it was suspected that more than one of the judicial barons and knights were themselves interested in the issue, having been abettors of the prisoners in their repeated enormities against the revenues, as well as other outrages to the damage of Church and palatinate.

But there the abbot sat, supported by the Prior of Dunholme, and surrounded by the monks of his order, clothed in a purple robe, over which was suspended the red cross of the crusades, his clerical secretary by his side taking notes. Several subordinate officials stood on each side, one of whom, standing immediately behind the abbot's chair, bore in his hands a bannerol emblazoned with the significant figure of 'a knight on horseback armed, and holding a sword in one hand, the arms of the bishopric in the other.' Throughout the hall, in silent groups, were the burgesses and vassals.

Anon silence was commanded, there not having been a whisper to disturb it for the last few minutes. Whereupon a herald proclaimed and demanded, in the name of Hugh, by

divine permission Lord Bishop of Duresme, temporal prince, Earl of Northumberland and Sadberg, Count Palatine and Sheriff Paramount, as also in the name of his deputed vicar, the Lord Abbot of St. Peter's, on peril of ecclesiastical censure, pains, and penalties, that all persons having knowledge, understanding, suspicion, and all or any other imaginable or unimaginable way of knowing anything, or supposing anything, to the detriment of the varlets ycelpt Squire, and Friar, and Hosteller (for the latter had been added to the libel or suit), feloniously trespassing on the rights of the palatinate, and wickedly defrauding the same, together with other high and mighty misdemeanours and crimes, should immediately come forward and delate the same before the high court presided over by the deputy vice-admiral, assisted by the temporal barons and others.

Whereupon, silence having been again commanded, another herald advanced, and in the name of the outraged palatine, only now alluded to by his temporal titles, in Norman tongue proceeded to impound and implead the said three varlets, and them of divers crimes, felonies, and malfeasances to accuse, and especially with attempt to defraud the revenue of the earl-bishop (evidently the sore point), by tampering with the coin, and trafficking within the bishopric without letters of licence; winding up with an enumeration of certain heresies, very damnable though not very intelligible, but having relation to the sect of which Waldo was the reputed leader, and which, owing to the efforts of the Church to extinguish by fire and sword, were spreading into other lands than France, but which heresies the lord bishop reserved for ecclesiastical censure, the secular court not being competent to try such issues.

As this tirade had been delivered in Norman, it was of course much to the enlightenment of the auditory 'below the bar,' who, being for the most part Saxons, eschewed the abhorred language of their conquerors.

During the next few minutes some commotion occurred, caused by the guard in charge of the prisoners forcing their passage from a side door, and arranging the said prisoners in front of the court; on the completion of which, and the excitement occasioned by the procedure having subsided, a monk arose, and in the same language accused the prisoners, Ulric de Veaux, Eric Fitzwalter, and Hugh Eling, of the crimes charged against them, and challenged them to reply and rebut the same if they were able; but which, though repeated by the herald, the

prisoners made no attempt to do. The bearing of Ulric and Eric was somewhat defiant, and a curl that occasionally played on the former's lip seemed to indicate a contempt of the whole proceeding; the demeanour of the hosteller was less confident. There were those on the bench who, by their uneasy movements and furtive glances, it was evident to a close observer were not unfamiliar with the faces of the first two, whose original station, it was whispered, had been above that of ordinary ceorl or socman, or even Norman adventurer, and which their deportment tended to confirm.

After the lapse of a brief space, during which every eye was riveted on the prisoners in expectation of an attempted defence, another monk, with whose fraternity in those days the study of the mysteries of the law rested, arose, and, recapitulating the charges of the accusing brother, proceeded to analyse and define the amount of turpitude comprised in each act, and the particular law applicable thereto; and, after the *ex parte* examination of a few villeins and one or two officials, commissioners of water passages and beaconers, claimed a verdict on behalf of his liege lord. But a difficulty arose in the minds of one or two of the barons that the compliant presiding official was unable to remove. Each witness, although he had very positively affirmed to what he had been required to testify, had, on being recalled at the suggestion of the said barons, and confronted by the prisoners, failed to identify them,—not that he entertained any scruples in doing so, but that, on turning towards the accused as directed, the withering scowl of Ulric sent a tremor through his soul that caused him to waver, and hesitate to add this to his previous loose testimony.

The court was in a dilemma; but the last-named clerico-advocate soon came to its relief, by *mercifully* suggesting and demanding, on behalf of the prisoners, an appeal to the ordeal by fire; but had no sooner resumed his seat, than another, more learned in laws, customs, and privileges, ecclesiastical and feudal, objected, and proceeded most conclusively to argue the impossibility of the ordeal by fire being decreed to such base-born, apart from the difficulty that would in all probability interpose in regard to one of the culprits, in the attempt to bind the red-hot iron to the *right* hand, he having already parted with that necessary member to the transaction, and which hand *alone* was essential in such trial.

A consultation thereupon ensued between the lay officers or

the court, who were at a loss in what manner to proceed, more than one leaning to the opinion that the case was not proven. In the midst of their perplexity, a slight movement took place around the ecclesiastical bench, and presently a friar was observed to issue therefrom, and approach the court and communicate with the vice-admiral, who thereupon conferred with the barons, and at the conclusion rose, as did the court, and all save the abbot and prior and his attendant monks, who retained their seats, thereby intimating their non-participation in the judicial sentence. A slight agitation was perceptible among the auditory and retainers, but which was instantly checked by the herald raising his baton and demanding attention. Thereupon the sheriff proclaimed that his highness the lord abbot, leaning to the side of mercy, as became his holy office, had interposed, and suggested that, though the fire test could not be applied, the prisoners should be allowed the water ordeal; and that in compliance with such request the court had so ruled. The prisoners were then marched off to the door by which they entered, and conducted back to three separate cells, into which a solitary ray of light only was admitted by the narrow slit or opening high up in the wall. As no time was to be lost, it was not long before a godly monk was closeted with each, once more to urge on them the advantage of confession, if not of the crime with which they stood charged, at least to as wholesome an extent as would relieve their conscience of all minor burdens; but, finding them impervious to all solicitations, the scandalized monks withdrew, marvelling at their hardihood; and this being so flagrant an act of contumacy, almost unheard of in those religious days, it was concluded, and soon got abroad, that the malignants were in league with the execrable Peter Waldo, who, having himself preceded them to Tophet, was affording them aid and succour as the chief executive of the ruler of that region in the heretical department, which was further confirmed by a report that the warders were unable to enter the cells from the suffocating fumes of brimstone.

But now, away up in the hill at Oxenhall, the esmas, theowas, and other villeins were hard at work with pick and shovel, digging and delving until three deep, broad pits were sunk side by side; whilst others, again, were as busily employed in forming ditches or trenches, along which the water from the spring higher up was conducted into the pits, until each was filled to the brim.

Christmas day was far advanced before the rites and solemnities incident to that holy day left the ecclesiastics at liberty to return to their attention to Ulric and his companions ; but now, as evening drew on, barons and knights, clothed in cuirass, helmet, and silk skin-tights, each followed by armour-bearers, laden with pikes, and bows, and pole-axes, or other weapons composing the armoury of those times, assembled around the castle, where they were joined by the marechal, seneschal, and other officials, and the usual retinue of vassals, armed with iron gorget or lance, and in coats of mail or quilled wamboo.

Presently the portcullis was raised and the gates thrown open, and the three prisoners, preceded and surrounded by guards, and duly manacled, issued forth ; whereupon the assemblage formed into line at a short distance from the walls, and halted. In a few seconds a banneret appeared in the gateway, followed by the abbot, prior, and monks ; and as they emerged therefrom, at a signal from the marechal the procession commenced its long march. Erewhile the bell of St. Cuthbert at Darlington was heard tolling in the distance. The night was still and dark, save where fitful streaks, like boreal coruscations, flashed over the distant hill to which they wended their way. Anon the pine torches carried by the retainers were lit, and their sombre lurid glare, except as it fell on the leafless trees and fallow ground over which they passed, made all beyond the darker. Now rose on the air the deep sonorous toll of a cloister bell ; and as each stroke died away it seemed to awaken sepulchral echoes in every glade, and some there were who thought they saw dim spectral shadows there, which as they saw they crouched the closer and crossed their breasts. But now the field is reached, and a low muffled sound, and then a solemn chant from the abbot's retinue, rises above the noise of the tramp of feet : the holy men are intoning an anticipatory requiem. The crisp frost-cemented grass, twigs, and earth crackle under their tread, and the thin ice coating some puddle yields as they sink ankle deep. Anon arrived at the base of the hill, the procession halts, and forms in files around the pit at some yards therefrom.

The derelicts advanced with their attendant guards, and their fetters were removed from one hand and foot ; then the sheriff stepped forward and challenged them to avow their guilt, and thereby avoid the ordeal. A scornful smile lit up the face of Ulric, as he turned to his comrades and laughed a derisive laugh, and waved the sheriff off. Fitzwalter laughed, though not so

loud, and Eling faintly took up the cachinnation. At this a monk advanced and prayed them confess, but they laughed again, this time more in unison. The monk hesitated, whilst the assembled crowd seemed startled at such unwonted hardihood, and looked askance at the venerable abbot, who now with meekest aspect, and followed by the prior, came slowly forward until he arrived within a few feet of the centre pit, when he halted, and lifted the cross that hung on his breast, and, raising it on high, in solemn tone prayed them confess. Scarcely had he uttered the word before the trio laughed again, but this time in high concert,—loud, louder, louder,—until back from the hill—was it the echo?—rang out a ha! ha! ha! as of a thousand gibing sprites, and, as the trembling varlets looked that way, the borean lights appeared by their wavy motion to be joining in the merry freak, and even the far-off bell seemed to change its deep tones to a shriller broken clang. The crowd drew closer to each other, the torches emitted a flickering blue flame that threw a ghastly hue over the faces of the terrified circle; and hurriedly they crossed themselves and uttered an ave or pater, with an added prayer that they might get safely through their pious work.

At a signal from the abbot the halwerkmen led each culprit to the edge of the particular pit assigned him, followed by a friar prepared to shrive them in case they yet repented. In the interim, dark heavy clouds had been rolling rapidly up, the lights over the hill had disappeared, and the bare tall trees on the summit began to crack and bend to the keen frosty wind, that suddenly came on with biting strength, causing vassals, officials, and monks to draw their hoods and garments closely around them.

The abbot and prior, attended by the brotherhood, now approached each pit and solemnly consecrated the water, whilst an official caused each victim to make oath that he had no spell, charm, or enchantment, whereby he could frustrate the trial. This done, every tonsured head bowed, and, with arms folded across their breasts, sent forth a melancholy wail. The seneschal raised his wand, and the halwerkmen seized Eric and Hugh and threw them headlong into the pits, to swim or sink according to guilt or innocence. And now all eyes were turned to Ulric, for, as his guards approached to assist him in like manner into his cold bath, his large lustrous eyes flashed with unearthly fire, his hitherto compressed lips parted and exhibited his firmly clenched

teeth, and an expression of malignancy overspread his features. For an instant the halwerkers hesitated, then laid their trembling hands on him, and he shook them violently off. An uneasy movement went through the crowd. There were fearful theowas and ceorles; there were vindictive pietists; there were knights valiant and vengeful; there were the austere disciples of St. Cuthbert: but where were the angels of mercy?—the sighing of the wind as it died away, perchance, breathed their compassionate presence. Ulric de Veaux took two strides back, raised his right hand defiantly, and with a renewed burst of laughter sprang forward, and, leaping into the pit, broke through the thin ice that had begun to form on the surface of the water, and disappeared.

In breathless awe the excited assemblage gazed intently upon the pits; the wail of the monks ceased, and there was a painful hush; not a sound, save the moaning of the wind through the trees on the hill-top, to which locality it seemed confined, and which occasionally caused a hurried look in that direction, for it sounded like a funeral dirge.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a clanging that chilled every heart, and knelled the close. It ceased, and a deep yellow hue streaked the inky cloud that had settled above, and in another instant it broke as though riven by lightning, and a rushing hurricane tore up trees and brush; and then ensued a horrible crash, followed by a fearful trembling of the earth on which they stood, whilst three dark red jets of flame, like tongues of fire, ascended out of the pits, and in the midst of each jet were the forms of the ordealists, and over all a fiery dragon. A loud laugh, re-echoed from the hills, as of a thousand voices, then another quaking of the earth, a deafening crash, and the whole extent on which the affrighted throng were gathered was suddenly upheaved till it towered in the air far above, and, amid blinding flashes and deafening peals, rocked and reeled until another crash, when all disappeared—swallowed up;—and, sinking down to its present level, nothing remained save the three pits, thence known and ever since called ‘Hell Kettles,’ which, accordant with the character of the first term in their designation, were long believed to be bottomless, and the water as hot as—well, as a kettle of water would be if it were boiling in that region.

Thus ends the legend; but of which the ancient chronicle of Tinmouth, for prudential reasons, of course, and with an eye to ‘the scandal that might have arisen had it gone forth that any of

the order of St. Cuthbert disappeared in so irregular a way, has only recorded 'that in the year 1179, upon Christmas day, at Oxenhall, in the outfields of Darlington, the earth rose up to a great height in the manner of a lofty tower, and in this state continued till the evening, when, sinking down with a horrid noise, it was swallowed up, and left *three* pits full of water, that have continued ever since.'

The story ended, and which had detained the narrator and his hearers longer than the time allotted for their meal, the waggoner jumped up, and, unbuckling the nosebags from the horses' heads, stowed them away, readjusted the head-gear, and started off at a quicker pace than ordinarily; he mounting his galloway, whilst the boys contrived to climb into their nest at the rear of the vehicle, at which feat they had by this time become more expert, and there went over such portions of the story as had most impressed each,—lasting long, and only brought to a termination as, one after the other, the sawing motion of the conveyance rocked them to sleep, from which they were awoke by the jolt and jerk of the waggon, as the jaded horses dragged their heavy load to its final destination, the inn yard at Bernard Castle. Here, with the rest of his freight, they were handed over to the charge of the landlord, but whose name, appearance, and even the designation of his inn, have faded from memory,—not improbably the same at which Dickens in after years put up, when collecting his materials for *Nicholas Nickleby*.

They had not long concluded the meal which the worthy landlady, with a sympathetic heart, set before the hungry lads, when a single-horse chaise drove to the door, and the redoubtable schoolmaster himself, after an effort, attended with some difficulty, descended therefrom, and with much apparent heartiness expressed his great satisfaction at their safe arrival thus far on their journey, his paternal anxiety on their account having been great. After quieting his nervous temperament by a strong sedative of brandy and water, he proceeded to make arrangements for the transfer of his pupils to the neighbourhood of Bowes, a village about five miles distant, around which congregated—what must since have added to its fame, at least in the social history of that part of the country—the renowned Yorkshire boarding-schools. There were one or two others in a locality not far distant, but the preference seemed to be given to this

extreme north-west corner of that large county, where they congregated and prospered.

The elder boy was taken into the schoolmaster's gig, and driven to the Academy, whilst the other two, mounted on a raw-boned nag, one in front of, and the other behind, a gawky country lad, were directed to pursue their way to the same juvenile repository, whither, after a most painful ride, that at least one has never forgot, they arrived scarcely able to budge, so shaken that every joint seemed dislocated, and maimed besides by the scythe, or something like it, that that wretched old hack wore on the top of his back.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. SKEGGS KEEPS HIS BIRTHDAY.

ON Mr. Grumphy's return to the surgery in Catherine Street, after shipping off Willie, and still wrestling with the contending emotions occasioned by the two opposite causes, the parting and the pummelling, he found a note lying on his desk, that had been dropped into the night-box, and taken out by the boy (with others), addressed to himself, and which, on tearing open with some petulance, read thus:—

'DEAR OLD GRUMPY,—As to-night is my birthday, I drop these few lines into the box, to say I hope it finds you as it does me, all salubrious at this present; and to add in conclusion, that you are expected at number—now I come to think, it has no number—so we'll call it number *one*,—you know it's the third door right; whereof fail not at your peril.—With many happy returns of the day to us both, I am till death, dear Grumphy, your old friend,
OCTAVIUS SKEGGS.

P.S. At eight o'clock.

N.B. To-night, in case you forget.

The first impulse of Mr. Grumphy was to tear up the note and take no notice of the invitation.

'Umph! old Grumphy—Grumphy! He was such a very pleasant fellow himself!—He had too much conceit by half—wanted some of it taken out of him;—no, he would not go—be hanged if he would!' And so concluding, the injured Mr. Grumphy crumpled up the note and threw it under the desk, and, as he dismissed it from his mind, returned to his previous musings, which, during the intervals of attendance on the surgeon and dispensing medicines, continued to alternate between the aforesaid two incidents of the morning's adventure. At times his rough usage of the bottles and jars intimated that he was back in the ware-

house in Thames Street, rehearsing his pugilistic encounter ; at the conclusion of which a very satisfactory state of things ensued, judging by the repeated flappings, always accompanied by approving smiles. Presently, however, a revulsion took place, for after another few minutes' attention to compounding a prescription, as he rolled the phial in paper, and commenced to write the address thereon, he would pause, lay down the bottle and pen, and, leaning against the shelves, fall into a thoughtful, pensive mood : he was in the cabin again, and the painful reminiscence produced a corresponding painful expression on his countenance, disturbed by an occasional heavy sigh and twitching of the face.

As the day wore on, the latter became the more frequent phase, until eventually, being most in accord with the normal state, it prevailed to the exclusion of all other ; and, as the evening closed in, he became too dejected to summon courage to return to his rooms in St. Martin's Lane, where he would be still more forcibly reminded of his loss, and, as a consequence, his emotions became more intensified.

It was in this state of mind, but glad to obtain a respite therefrom, that the resented invitation recurred to him, and, searching amongst the rubbish,—which had been added to during the passing hours of the day,—he drew out the crushed note, and, straightening it on the counter, read and re-read, until he was quite surprised, and even *taken*, by the friendly tone in which it was written, and equally surprised that he had so misconstrued it on the first perusal. ‘Certainly it *was rather* too familiar, but then it was just like him,—still, he ought to be taught better ;—however, he'd look over it this time and go ;’ which, considering the *amount* of provocation, and the *unselfish* consideration that induced Mr. Grumphy to yield, was a proof of great magnanimity on that gentleman's part, and which he was perfectly sure he would not have displayed towards any other person.

So, having washed and brushed and arranged his toilet as best he could, and left word with the boy that he was gone out on business, he hastened away, and arrived, not long after the appointed time, at Mr. Skeggs' street door, whence he contrived to find his way up to that gentleman's snuggery, with no further mishap than a few stumbles as he groped his way up the dark, narrow staircase, quite usual to those not familiar with its tortuous windings, but which served as a signal to warn his host of his approach, who, rushing from his room, was at the head of

the stairs, cheering him on as he continued to more cautiously thread his way. Grasping him by the hand, Octavius hauled his stately friend into the room, and, closing the door, commenced a tirade of impetuous greetings and welcomes.

'Glad to see you, Grumpy!—'fraid you weren't coming. Got my note?—Very glad to see you, old boy. Now, old chap, give me your hat, and take that seat—there;' and as the assistant was slow in complying with the last request, he took him by the shoulders and pulled him back into a capacious arm-chair that he had borrowed for the occasion.

'There, my boy, how do you like that?—comfortable, ain't it? Now, unbutton your coat and make yourself at home, whilst I try to do the same;' and then Mr. Skeggs laughed at the oddity of the idea. But, as Mr. Grumphy did not quite relish such summary proceedings, he of course maintained his accustomed gravity, whereat Mr. Skeggs' laughter subsided.

'Now, Grump' (the gentleman addressed frowned), 'how have ye been since I saw you last?—why, it's an age since. No catching sight of you now-a-days.—Time taken up, eh?—lady in the case? Ha! ha! how is she?—where's she live?—and what's her name?—Something about her "werry peekooliar?" Come now, man-alive, don't look so lumpy!' And thereupon he threatened to give his surly friend 'a dig in the ribs if he didn't look more pleasant,' after which he placed on the table some glasses, a couple of black bottles, a basket of apples, two dishes with nuts and raisins, and two or three saucers for plates, humming to himself as he did so, a verse of a song in unison with the badinage just uttered:

'Lovely woman is a treasure: what is man without her aid?

To protect her is a pleasure: I've a heart that's not afraid.

To arms, to arms we'll fly—when duty calls.'

'I say, Grump,'—Mr. Skeggs stopped and looked him slyly in the face,—'that's the lovely woman's arms, eh?—Who wouldn't fly into them? Why, what's a matter, old fellow, that you look so glumpy?—Don't like to be chaffed, eh?—well, I won't. But, serious. I've looked in once or twice when I was at the stamp office, but you were *non est inventus*, as we say in the law.—Great practice, eh? Saw old Blue Beard in the shop, so dropped the note in the box.'

By this time Octavius had succeeded in lighting an extra

candle, and, opening the door, went out and placed it on the landing at the head of the stairs. As he re-closed the door, he observed,—

‘I wonder what’s keeping Figgins.’

‘Do you expect company?’ said the assistant, rising and looking round for his hat.

‘O no; sit down, my dear chap. No, I assure you, nobody,—only Figgins; you don’t mind Figgins,—he’s nobody. Under a sort of compliment to him, so thought I’d ask him to come round. Sit down, there’s a good fellow; now, no excuse,—you don’t mind him?—who’s Figgins?’ saying which, Mr. Skeggs succeeded in reassuring his friend, and once more deposited him in the arm-chair. ‘Now, what’ll ye have?—what’ll I help you to?’

Just as he was about to pour out something from one of the bottles, footsteps, unusually loud, were heard on the stairs below, and, setting down the bottle in haste, he bade Mr. Grumphy help himself, and went to the top of the landing and called down, ‘Is that you?’ whereupon a gruff voice angrily responded,—

‘That me!—y-e-e-s, it *is* me, and I—I’d like to know what you—u want—to know for?’

‘Oh, I beg pardon, I thought’—

‘What—what business is it o’ yours whether it’s me or no?’

‘I beg pardon, sir,—it’s a mistake; I thought’—

‘Yes, I know—I know you. You don’t come that over me. You think—as how you’ve a right to be a watching of every one in the ’ouse; but—but darned if I—I don’t stop your spying.’

Thereupon the aggrieved gentleman appeared to be making desperate efforts to ascend Mr. Skeggs’ portion of the stairs, but each time he raised his foot in the attempt he lost his balance, and fell against a woman, evidently his wife, who was endeavouring to coax him into his own room.

‘What’s the matter with *you*, old woman? You—you’re drunk,—you’re drunk, marm. Look’ee here; let me lead you into your own ’partment, an’ do you keep there till you’re sober.’ This speech was followed by a scuffling noise, ending in the slamming of a door, and all was quiet.

After listening a few moments, Mr. Skeggs was about returning to his room, when he caught the sound of Mr. Figgins’ voice at the street entrance, inquiring ‘if anybody know’d which house Mr. Skeggs lived in.’

‘Hallo, Figgins, is that you?—This way, O.K., up here,’

shouted Mr. Skeggs, but had scarcely done so, before the door of the room into which the irate lodger had retired, was thrown violently open, and, reappearing at the landing, he demanded 'who called him, and if anybody wanted his head punched;' and as Mr. Figgins' head at that instant began to appear above the landing rail, as he climbed cautiously up the steep staircase, guided by the sound of the voice, the gentleman commenced squaring thereat in a scientific manner, and before the new arrival had time to be aware of the peril into which the said head was emerging, his hat was descending with rapid speed to the foot of the stairs, as the result of a well-aimed blow from the incensed lodger, followed almost as speedily by the astounded Mr. Figgins. The exertion made in the performance of this feat caused the pugilist's head to come with such force against the stringer of the second flight of stairs, that he reeled back stunned by the blow, and was dragged senseless into his room by the aid of one or two other lodgers, who rushed out of their apartments to witness 'the fight.'

All being again quiet, and no sign of further interposition, Mr. Skeggs took off his shoes, and, carrying them in his hand, crept down the stairs, first stopping to listen before he ventured to pass the door of the disabled man. Hearing nothing, he stepped softly by, and began to descend the next flight, the creaking of which, however, so alarmed him, that he missed a step, and had well-nigh gone head foremost, and only saved himself by letting go his shoes and catching at the banister; the noise occasioned by their fall riveted him to the spot, expecting nothing less than a renewal of the late scene, but as no one appeared, he gathered courage, and, having recovered his shoes, commenced a search for Mr. Figgins, whom he presently discovered standing on the opposite side of the street, brushing his hat with the sleeve of his coat, his eyes fixed on the door whence he had so precipitately issued. No sooner did Octavius step on to the side-walk, than, not recognising him in the dark, and concluding it was his late assailant, Figgins set off full speed, to the dismay of a crowd of boys hanging about a wheelbarrow some yards distant, who, under the full conviction that a constable had suddenly appeared and was making a dash at them, fled and scattered in every direction,—up stairways, round corners, and down alleys.

In vain Mr. Skeggs pursued, shouting after him to stop; but which he had no intention of doing, accelerated as he was by the

urgent cries of some women standing at a door as he ran past, and who evidently commiserated him,—

‘Go it, old un!—he’s on ye.’

Looking round and perceiving Skeggs close to him, in his terror he rushed forward and fell into an open cellar-way, luckily not deep; and as the impetus threw him to the other side, he broke his fall by catching at the wooden curb. In a minute Mr. Skeggs was by his side, and, having satisfied the gathering crowd that he had only a friendly design on the old gentleman, was allowed to interfere and conduct him back to his dwelling.

After ascertaining that, beyond a scratch on his hand and a slight bruise on his hip, he had met with no further damage, Mr. Skeggs brushed off the dirt, and, with many expressions of regret at the mishap and abuse of the drunken lodger, who, he informed him, was such an annoyance to the house that he feared he would be obliged to remove, led him back, and conveyed him safely up to his room, but which last was only accomplished after Octavius had first ascertained the state of things on the staircase, and returned therefrom with the assurance that the road was quite safe.

‘Mr. Figgins—Mr. Grumphy,’ said Octavius to the latter, who nodded his head in recognition as he laid down his glass, with which he had consoled himself during his host’s absence. ‘Sit down, Mr. Figgins. I’m very sorry—Don’t be alarmed;’—Mr. Figgins was looking round the room rather suspiciously—‘this is my apartment,—nothing to fear here; an Englishman’s house is his castle.’ Mr. Figgins thought it looked very much like it. ‘Now, let’s enjoy the evening.’

‘Enjoy the evening!’ said Mr. Grumphy. ‘You commenced rather early,—only you seem to have been having the fun thus far all to yourselves.’

‘Mr. Grumphy,’ said Skeggs, ‘none o’ your s’tiricles. Now, Figgins, what’ll you have?—That’s real old Jamaky, and that’s splendid Hollands,’ placing both the bottles before his friend;—‘help yourself, sir.’

Thereupon Mr. Figgins drew out the corks of each, and applied his nose in their place, sniffing at each alternately, until finally he concluded he’d take a glass of gin and water; and, having helped himself to the Hollands, he pronounced it fust-rate.

‘Ulloa, Grumphy!—Beg pardon,—what do you take?—your glass is empty. Fill up, old boy.’ With which invitation Mr. Grumphy was not slow in complying, brewing himself a glass of stiff

rum and water ; and as Mr. Skeggs' taste was in the same direction, he followed suite.

It was then proposed to indulge in a smoke, and pipes and tobacco being ready, the trio were soon enveloped in a cloud of niggerhead.

During the first part of the performance it proceeded with little interruption, each apparently busied in his own reflections, until the otherwise garrulous Figgins suddenly recollected himself, and, knocking the loose ashes of his pipe into the grate, exclaimed,—

'Bless my 'art, if ve ain't forgot it's Tavy's berth-day ! Come, Mr. Grumpus, let's fill our glasses ;' and forthwith the two filled up with their favourite beverage. 'Now, Mr. Grumpus ;' Mr. Figgins rose and awaited that gentleman's doing the same, but as he made no sign of compliance, he stepped over to him, and, touching his glass with his own, turned round to Octavius and said, 'Mr. Skeggs, we vishes you many a 'appy return of the seasons, and may you 'ave many of them ;—Mr. Grumpus !'

Mr. Grumphy bowed assent, and both took a long pull at their glasses, as though the fulfilment of the wish in some measure depended on the quantity that could be imbibed in one breath ; after which, and as soon as Mr. Figgins had recovered his breath, he continued,—

'Mr. Skeggs, as the young vimens as lives in the King of Turkey's 'ouse allers says to him, May you live for ever !—eh, Mr. Grumpus !'—and thereupon, though the latter appeared in no way inclined to repeat the toast, he joined with him in a second application to the tumbler, both arriving at the bottom thereof at the same time.

'Gentlemen,' said Mr. Skeggs, rising.

'Hear, hear !' said Mr. Figgins, knocking the table with the bottom of his tumbler.

'Gentlemen, you've wished me—a long life, health and happiness ;—I think that was it ?' said Skeggs, referring to the spokesman.

'Oll korrekt, Mr. Skeggs,' said the elder gentleman.

'Thank you ;—the same to you ;—the same to you, Mr. Grumphy.' And Mr. Skeggs sat down, having first emptied *his* tumbler.

'I say, Octavy, how's the haction gettin' on ?—deaf Bodkins paid up yet ?'

'Mr. Figgins, you're here this evening as my guest and

friend, and not as my client;—we won't talk shop, if you please.'

'Oh, werry well, just as you please; on'y tell me that much, cos I wants the dibs.'

'Mr. Figgins!' said Skeggs remonstratingly.

'Oh, werry well,—to-morrow 'll do.'

The glasses continuing to be filled, the bottles became correspondingly empty, whilst the spirits of the three friends rose inversely, so that even the taciturn assistant gradually thawed, and became loquacious and amiable, unless when occasionally ruffled by the unguarded sallies of the jocose Skeggs, but which, on being resented, were speedily atoned for by his adroitly turning it off on Figgins, or by the more successful mode of a fresh application of the bottle to his friend's glass.

'I say, Figgins,' said Skeggs, giving a knowing wink at the assistant, after one of his aforesaid rebuffs by the latter, 'Why were you like Adam, when you fell into the cellar just now?'

'Hadham!' replied Mr. Figgins, rubbing his hip and looking at his scratched hand,—'what Hadham?'

'Why, Adam that fell,' replied Skeggs, 'you know.'

'Vere did he fall?' said Figgins, 'and I'll tell ye.'

'Where?—why—why—now, let me see,' replied Skeggs, taken somewhat aback by the question,—'I declare it's quite gone out of my head that. Where was it, Grumphy?—you know.'

'How do I know who you're talking about?'

'Were it the chap on the stairs?' suggested Mr. Figgins.

Whereat Skeggs affected a laugh, exclaiming, 'The man on the stairs! Well, Figgins, you *are* a case;' and then he looked into his empty glass with a slight sense of the ridiculous, and an impression that he had better not pursue the riddle any further; so, by way of changing the subject to something in which he was better versed, he addressed the assistant in a bantering tone,—

'I say, old fellow, how's Miss Austen?'

'Miss Austen!' said Figgins,—'who's she?' and he looked slyly at Mr. Grumphy.

'Ah, you may ask that,' said Skeggs, this time winking at Figgins, by way of encouraging him to continue. 'I s'pose he don't know her either.'

Now the unexpected mention of this lady's name touched a rather sensitive chord, and awoke feelings that it had been the assistant's endeavour by this evening's visit to smother.

'Skeggs,' said Grumphy, looking at him sternly, 'just you keep your nonsense to yourself.'

'Oh, you needn't repudiate,' said the irrepressible Skeggs, quite unconscious that he was treading on disagreeable ground; 'I'm sure she's a nice old lady.'

'Skeggs,' said Grumphy, with a slight quaver in his voice, 'you'd better not.'

'O my!' said the unfortunate Skeggs, 'what's up?—Well, I'm bothered if a fellow will be allowed to speak presently. I say, Figgins, let's all cry;' and, taking out his pocket-handkerchief, he was about to commence proceedings, when a glance at the assistant's face caused it to terminate in a strong effort at his nose; after which a silence of some minutes ensued, broken by Mr. Figgins remarking that 'he thought they were having a Quakers' meeting;' whereupon Mr. Skeggs said he thought so too, and suggested, by way of stirring them up, that they toast Mr. Grumphy's chief, in which Mr. Figgins coincided, but proposed that they drink his health coupled with that of his assistant.

'No, no, not to-night,—we'll not mind him to-night,' said Mr. Grumphy.

'Why, you don't object to healths, Grump?—Oh, I see he don't think gin and water nor Jamaky's a healthy mixture. Yellow basilicon and black jack,—eh, Mr. Figgins?'

'Don't mention 'em, 'Tavy,—it allers makes me feel queer;' and Mr. Figgins rubbed that part of his person below his ribs usually affected by the operation of the last-named article.

'By the by,' said Skeggs, in despair of hitting on some subject congenial to his friend, and in the full persuasion that he had found one at last, 'how's the little one,—that pretty, bright, light-haired boy?—I always liked that little fellow. There's something good in him; and he's so fond of you, Grump. It does one good to see the little chap climb on your knee and throw his arms round your neck.—Fine little fellow!'

A mere allusion, under the circumstances, to this subject would have been sufficient to disturb the assistant, but Skeggs had interlarded his remarks with so many diminutives, that the former could with difficulty suppress his emotion. The glass was raised to his lips, but withdrawn untasted. He rose and placed it on the table, turned his face to the chair, began settling the cushion; then reached for a few nuts and commenced cracking them with his teeth, as he reseated himself, throwing the shells into the fireplace.

Mr. Skeggs had observed him with some perplexity, when it occurred to him that the subject on which he had touched was connected with his friend's crankiness, as he termed it; so, as soon as Mr. Grumphy had settled down again, he edged his chair a little closer, and in a half-whisper said, 'What's a matter, Grumphy?—is he sick?'

'Who?' said the assistant, as though unconscious to whom he alluded.

'Why, your boy, as you call him,—little Willie.'

'He's gone,' said the assistant, in a tone that satisfied Mr. Skeggs that he had rightly divined the cause of his friend's testiness.

'Gone!' said Skeggs, starting. 'No! you don't say that!'

'Yes, I do. He's gone, poor'—he stopped short and reached for the tumbler, and, emptying the contents, appeared to regain his composure.

'Well, I'm blowed! Ah, I see, old fellow, that's what's working you so to-night.'

'No, it ain't. I don't care that!—and he snapped his fingers savagely. But Mr. Skeggs knew better; and although he might therefore have changed the subject in deference to his friend's feelings, his curiosity and interest were too much raised to do so.

'But where's he gone?'

'To old Scareum's.'

'Scareum's—Scareum's?' said the perplexed Skeggs.

'Well, the schoolmaster's.'

'Oh, I know who you mean. I saw it in a letter from your governor to mine. 'Tain't Scareum; it's a queer name,—Queerem—no. I'll have it directly,—Queercrow—Scarecrow—No, that ain't it. What's this you call a donkey kind of fellow?'

'I'd call him a hass,' chimed in Mr. Figgins.

'That's it.—You've hit it, Figgins. What did I say the first part was?—Bother, it's gone again!' and after one or two further efforts he gave it up, deciding that Figgins had come the nearest to it.

'Kearas!' said the assistant, whose memory had been refreshed by the efforts of the two.

'Kearas!' said Mr. Figgins,—'Kearas! I've heerd that name afore. What line's he in?'

'He's a schoolmaster,' replied Skeggs.

'Ah, so he be. I know'd I know'd the name; and he lives somevere—let me see, down at—down at'—

'Yorkshire,' said Mr. Grumphy.

'Ay, so he do; that's vere I mean.'

'And what do you know about him?' observed Mr. Grumphy.

'Oh, nothin' much,' replied Mr. Figgins.

'But when did Willie go?' said Skeggs; 'and what way? and who's gone with him?'

'This morning, by himself, in a sailing ship.'

'And you let that little darling go all alone in a ship?'

'I didn't!' said the assistant in a petulant tone.

'Then who did, I'd like to know?' and Mr. Skeggs looked rather severely at the assistant; but as the latter made no reply, he went on,—'Oh, I know; it was that atomy section of yourn,—that other Scarus, old Sawbones. Poor dear little Willie!—and you never told me he was going.'

A brief silence ensued; then Skeggs recommenced as though conversing with the subject of his thoughts,—

'Ah, Willie! never said you were going, and never said good-bye to your old friend Skeggs.'

Mr. Grumphy pulled out his handkerchief and commenced coughing, then lowered his head whilst he wiped his mouth, and then his forehead; and as, of course, the cough affected his eyes, he just drew the handkerchief across them, and concluded by applying it to the organ for which such articles are usually in request, and, after two or three sonorous sounds, turned towards Mr. Figgins and inquired how he became acquainted with Mr. Kearas.

'Vell, I never seed him but once, an' that were going on now more nor—more nor six year or thereabouts, which were ven I were done a-livin' in Mr. Trelawney's service. I mind'—

Here a rap was heard at the door, and Mr. Skeggs responded by a loud command to 'come in,' when a small girl made her appearance with a very shiny face, having just been washed and polished off, habited in a seedy short-sleeved frock, displaying her skinny arms and neck to advantage.

'Oh, it's you, Sary! Just lift them glasses and bottles and bring on the supper,' said Mr. Skeggs.

In obedience to which order the little maid was not long in going through the operation,—the supper consisting of a dish of corn beef with appendages, which had been previously provided, and was covered over by a towel on a side table. After a short absence she re-appeared with a foaming pot of porter (a few tell-tale drops of the effervescing liquid lingering around the young lass's mouth), which she placed on the table.

'Now, the glasses, Sarah,' said Mr. Skeggs in an encouraging tone. 'That's a clever girl. Mr. Figgins, Sarah goes to school,—don't you, Sarah?'

'On Sundays, sir,' said Sarah.

'Yes, I mean on Sundays.'

'Do she? That's good,' said Mr. Figgins, who felt it right to show his interest in moral reforms, at least as far as words went. 'Been a-goin' long?'

'O yes, sir, hever so long,—a whole lot o' Sundays.'

'Well, that *is* good,' said Mr. Figgins. 'Now, I wager you ain't the same gal as afore you went.'

'No; teacher says I ain't.'

'Ah! I know'd it. You hear that, Skeggs?'

Mr. Skeggs nodded his head approvingly, quite pleased at his guest's manifested interest.

'Teacher says I'm so haltered they're going to make a hanec-dote of me at the next hanniversiree.'

'Ah! see that—on'y see that,' said the admiring Figgins, at the same time taking a more especial survey of the prodigy, and at the conclusion adding, 'That's right, Sally; allers go to Sunday school, like a good gal. My Araby teaches at one, which, as Araby says, is vere they learns good things;—don't they, dear?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You don't do like those naughty girls in the street, do you, dear?'

'No, sir.'

'Now, tell me, Sarah,' interposed Mr. Skeggs, desirous of emulating his guest in his catechetical course, and in order to bring out more fully the beauty of her moral training, which might thereby in some measure dispel Mr. Figgins' unfavourable impression of the neighbourhood, judging merely from his late mishap,—'Tell me, if a naughty girl in this street was to call you names, you would forgive her, wouldn't you?' Mr. Skeggs looked at Mr. Figgins with a complacent look.

'Forgive her!' said Sarah, as though not exactly comprehending the full force of the question.

'Yes; you would not hurt her, nor do anything to her?'

Sarah brightened up and twisted her apron round her arm, whilst Mr. Skeggs awaited her reply with an anticipatory smile.

'Wouldn't hurt her? No, sir, not if I couldn't catch her.'

Mr. Skeggs looked funny, especially as he detected Mr.

Figgins winking at Mr. Grumphy, over whose features, for the first time that evening, a faint smile passed.

'That'll do, Sarah,' said Skeggs; 'we don't want you any more.'

The young lady retired, pluming herself on the evidence she had just afforded of her fitness for the forthcoming anniversary anecdote.

The meal was soon discussed, and the pewter emptied; and the two bottles, replenished from jars under Mr. Skeggs' bed, were producing their effect upon the three friends, most perceptible, perhaps, in the conduct of Mr. Grumphy, who was becoming more conversational.

'By the by, Figgins, thinking of that boy being sent off to what-you-call-em's in that shorthand way, reminds me you didn't tell us how you came to know that aforesaid,' said Skeggs.

'Ah, no more I did. Let's see, vere did I leave off?'

'Where you began,' said Mr. Grumphy, with an unusual amount of vivacity, which took his two friends by surprise; but who, however, only looked at one another in a knowing way, that seemed to imply that they recognised the source of the impulse.

'Go on, Figgins,' said Skeggs.

'Well, then, as I were sayin', afore I were in business on my own haccout.' Mr. Figgins paused and stirred his glass of gin and water, to afford time for the two friends to resolve that eventful epoch in their minds; then followed up the stirring by an application to its contents, when he resumed. 'Afore I were in business on my own haccout, I hemployed my leisure 'ours in a 'olesale 'ouse in Walbrook, in a-haiding of the conveyance of goods from one part of the building to the other part of the building.'

'And did Mr. what-you-call-em conduct the said business?' observed Mr. Skeggs, wishing to aid the prosy Figgins.

'Mr. Karras conduct the business! Now, I happeal to you, Mr. Grumpus, if I said so?'

'Go on,' said the assistant.

'I'm a-going to, if Tavy don't hinterrupt. Vell, as I were a-sayin', before I was in business'—

'Mr. Figgins,' exclaimed both his friends at once, 'that's not where you left off,—that's where you began.'

'Vas it?—vell, let a fellow speak,' said the rather befogged Figgins.

'Go on, sir,' said Skeggs.

'Vell, as I were a-sayin' of,—bother it, vere were I?—you've

put it clean out o' my 'ed. Let's see, vere had I got to?' Here Mr. Figgins closed and screwed up his eyelids and forehead.

'How came you to know Mr. Karras?' said the assistant.

'How came I?—Ah, that's the querry!—How came I to know Mr. Karras? Vell, you see, gentlemen,—you see, which was as he went to forren parts.'

'Who—Mr. Karras? Did he go abroad?'

'There ye are agen, a-catchin' of hevery word up as I says. 'Course Mr. Karras didn't go anyvere, 'cept to his hown place, wheresomdever that be. Vell, not to make a long story short, says he to me, says he, "Figgins," says he,—he allers called me by my christening name, genelmen, allers does,—"Figgins," says he—says he, "Figgins"— Vell, now, it's gone again! I forget what he said; howsomdever, he said it.'

'That is, Mr. Karras,' said Mr. Grumphy, anxious, but begining to fear that he'd learn nothing further to-night, in the present state of Mr. Figgins' intellect.

Mr. Figgins looked bewildered.

'Who went to foreign parts?' said Skeggs. 'That's what we want to know.'

'Who are you speaking about?' said the assistant.

'There ye go, both on ye at once. How howdaciously stoopid ye are! I see, I see,' tapping his forehead,—'taken more nor's good for ye. Genelmen, we'll retire.'

'Oh, it's too soon!—it's early yet, Mr. Figgins,' urged the host.

'Vell, my dear Tavy, you know as that lovely female wife of mine is werry hanxious ven I'm out late o' nights.'

'Just a little longer,' pleaded Skeggs.

'Vell, a few seconds don't signify nothing one way nor t'other; but you can't begin to form no idea how hanxious your old wومان are—no, Araby says it womans, not vimmen—*is* at them times, but you'll know some day.'

Just then the church clock struck eleven.

'Bless us, so late! Genelmen, I must go;' and, rising with some difficulty, he looked at his empty glass and then at Mr. Skeggs, but as that gentleman was under the impression that his guest could not carry any more, he took no notice thereof.

'Allow me to say I must go. It's your birthday,—ain't it, Tavy?'

Mr. Skeggs assented.

'Then, old boy, many of them. Mr. Gummy, we must go;—come on, Macduff. You're a jolly dog, Octavy,—just like me

when I was your age. I say, Gummy, afore we go, three cheers for 'Tavy;' and before they could interpose, 'Hurra—ay!' shouted Mr. Figgins.

'Stop!' exclaimed the alarmed Skeggs, as he rushed to his jolly friend and clapped his hand over his mouth,—'stop, Mr. Figgins, by all that's good! You'll raise the old boy about our ears in two minutes. Hark!'

He raised his finger, his fears already conjuring up a delegation, headed by the 'old boy' who had accorded so hearty a reception to Mr. Figgins on his arrival, coming to demand satisfaction for the outrage. A silence ensued, but as it was soon ascertained that no one had been disturbed, Mr. Figgins drew up his coat sleeves, and, looking very sternly towards the door, intimated his 'wish that some one would please to step in, that he might apply his fists to his two eyes;' but as there was no response to the invitation, he placed his hat very defiantly on the back of his head, and strode over to the door, which he made sundry efforts to open by the hinges. Thereupon Messrs. Skeggs and Grumphy concluded he would be better of an escort, and decided to accompany him part of the way. On arriving at the lower landing, Mr. Figgins was with difficulty restrained from repeating his challenge at the lodger's door, or at least from being permitted to give one 'hurray,' just one, for Skeggs and victory.

On reaching the street, the fresh air seemed to operate in rendering his heels lighter than his head, for he insisted on his two friends standing still whilst he went through the inimitable double shuffle as performed in his younger days, and by none like it since. The artistic manner in which Mr. Figgins lifted one leg, and then another, then both together, snapping his fingers the while, and accompanying his movements with strange ejaculatory cries, probably meant for music, did astonish the young men; who, however, very abruptly put an end thereto, by rushing on Mr. Figgins and grappling him by the arms, forcibly dragging him off, much to the disappointment of a sweep, who had summoned one of his pals and a young lady 'to see the old codger cutting didos,' entertained instead by a song from that gentleman, the last that was heard of him as he turned into Whitechapel being the ancient ditty, sung with variations, of

'Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he.'

Reprehensible as it was in Mr. Figgins to have so forgotten himself and his marital position in the company of his two baccalaurean friends, and thereby lowered their estimate of the married state (but which, we are happy to record, was a rare circumstance in Mr. Figgins' life), it was the more provoking, because it interfered with the recital of what, it must be apparent, had some important relation to this tale, and would earlier have thrown light on certain transactions connected therewith, than obtained till a much later period. That it was so viewed by the assistant, who was too well versed in the surgeon's tortuous proceedings not to understand its bearing thereon, is evident from the interest he took in urging Mr. Figgins to a narration of the missing link.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FLAW, AND PLANNING A NEW SUIT.

HOW Mr. Figgins fared on his arrival home, and the small opinion he entertained of himself the next morning, or the occasional disparaging reflections he cast on Mr. Skeggs for betraying him into such an improper state, we shall not stay to relate, nor refer to any further than to note, because of its significance, that Miss Arabella Figgins, in a somewhat unfilial way, protested against her papa's strictures on Mr. Skeggs, even insinuating that it was more likely a man so much his senior would lead the younger astray than the converse; and which was a very opportune remark, operating quite favourably in Mr. Figgins' behalf, as it immediately withdrew the expostulations of Mrs. Figgins with himself, to a remonstrance with the young lady for such undutiful expressions and reflections on her exemplary papa.

Leaving, therefore, Miss Figgins and her papa to right themselves, we turn to the gentleman who was thus, unconsciously, made the scapegoat for the last evening's improprieties.

Whether from the effects of the previous night's indulgence, or it not being an unusual occurrence, Mr. Skeggs managed to get to the office next morning after time. Just as he was entering the street doorway, casting a look down the yard, he saw Mr. Hawkes turning into it from the Bury. To dive into the entrance, and rush up-stairs three steps at a time, was the work of an instant; the latch of the door was down; an exciting search for the key in every pocket ensued, but which, as always happens on such occasions, was in the last examined. He had barely got inside as he heard Mr. Hawkes' foot ascending the stairs. Throwing his hat into a corner, he pulled his blotting pad out of the desk, and with a quill pen began to describe sundry characters on a piece of waste-paper as the attorney entered the room.

'Dear me, Mr. Skeggs, how dark it is! Why don't you pull up the blinds? Impossible you can see to write;' and he advanced towards the desk to ascertain the possibility.

'The sun's too strong,' said Mr. Skeggs, in his flurry uttering the first excuse that occurred, at the same time interposing himself between Mr. Hawkes and his desk to prevent any insight into his impromptu scribbling.

'Sun!' replied the attorney, looking around; 'when did the sun ever trouble you here?' and which was a very pertinent question, as it must have been at some remote period. 'Pull up the blinds; I can't see what you are doing.' Mr. Hawkes pushed his clerk aside whilst he examined the paper, with a view to decipher the hieroglyphics with which Mr. Skeggs had embellished it at sundry idle moments. 'Scareum—versus—versus.—Really, Mr. Skeggs, you must write plainer.' As the small addition of light, caused by his pulling up the blinds, might facilitate the inspection of the document, Mr. Skeggs began to feel particularly uncomfortable, the remainder of the composition having reference to an animal designated thereon as a hawk, described as a bird of prey, and illustrated in a very flourishing style by a bird with a man's head, intended for a likeness of the attorney, pouncing upon an unfortunate pigeon, with another human head, not unlike Figgins. Mr. Skeggs was rather expert at sketching. To his dismay, as he hastened back to his desk, the attorney was in the act of bringing the sheet of paper into conjunction with the fresh rays of light and his vision. In desperation, Skeggs raised his arm to snatch the paper from his hand, when his good genius came to his assistance, and prompted him to ask the attorney if he had got the note left on his table last evening.

'Note?—no,—note on my table! Why didn't you tell me that before? Who's it from?' Saying which he threw down the sheet of paper and hastened into his office, whilst Skeggs, with a sigh of relief, grasped the offensive writing and tore it into infinitesimally small pieces, replacing it by such papers as should have engaged his earlier attention. Scarcely had he done so before a shout intimated that the governor desired his presence.

'Mr. Skeggs, what's this mean?' said the attorney, in a voice that he was endeavouring to control, as the clerk entered.

'What, sir?'

'That, sir. Read it.'

Mr. Skeggs took up a long, narrow slip of printed paper, in

which several blanks had been filled in in writing, and which bore the official stamp and signature of a judge of King's Bench, and commenced reading to himself, running his eye only over the writing, the printing being stereotyped in his mind from constant use.

'Now, sir,' said the attorney, turning round and looking his clerk in the face, 'what account do you give of yourself? What do you say to that, Mr. Skeggs?—there's a mess. You, who I have engaged as a common law clerk, Chancery clerk, and conveyancing clerk, according as required,—and that's what you do! Here's a pretty scrape you have got me into again. Can't you read it, sir?' He snatched the document out of the bewildered clerk's hand. 'Can't you read it? It's a summons, is it not?'

'Yes, sir.'

'In Figgins and Bodkins.'

'Yes, sir, I see it is.'

'To show cause why the declaration should not be set aside, and judgment go by default?'—What's the meaning of that, Mr. Skeggs?—"the counts of the said declaration being stated in error," as the defendant's attorney informs me in this note. Now, Mr. Skeggs, what have you to say?'

Mr. Skeggs was silent, then looked at the back and front of the summons, and then turned it up and down, as though he expected to find his answer thereon.

'Now, Mr. Skeggs, I am waiting for an explanation.'

'Well, sir,' stammered Mr. Skeggs at length, 'what's wrong?'

'What's wrong! Haven't I just told you?—don't the summons tell you?—Does it not name the declaration?'

'I didn't draw out the declaration.'

'You did not draw out the declaration!—Oh, that's how you expect to get out of it! Don't I know that, sir? would I have trusted you to draw out so particular a document, sir? Did not I spend the whole morning in drawing it out?' It occurred to Mr. Skeggs it was rather a long time to take in filling up a printed form of scarcely one page of foolscap, but of course he did not say so, but it did occur to him to say,—

'Then, sir, how am I to blame?'

'Oh! ah! he! he! Now you think you've got me, eh?—How are you to blame? How? Who made the fair copy, sir?'

'I did, sir.' Mr. Skeggs began to hesitate.

'You did—of course you did. And it's that you served on the defendant's attorney, is it not, sir?'

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And did I not impress upon you to be most particular, and copy word for word, *verbatim et literatim*, and to read it over and compare it before you served it on the attorney? Did I not, sir?’

‘And so I did.’ Mr. Skeggs spoke a little more confidently.

‘Then how came the error?’

Skeggs’ confidence ceased; but by way of obtaining a few moments’ respite until he could collect his thoughts, he asked timidly, lest he was only aiding to deeper convict himself, if he should fetch the original.

‘What for—to show me? I can repeat it to you by heart, sir. Yes, bring it that I may point out to you your gross inattention.’

Mr. Skeggs did not wait a second order, but quickly disappeared, whilst Mr. Hawkes paced up and down his room, pinching the legs of his pantaloons in an agitated state.

Mr. Skeggs overhauled the papers in his desk, whither he had thrown the draft after copying it, but in his confusion he buried it amongst the heap of spoiled and other loose papers, which occasioned some delay. After a further search, he caught sight of it in rather a crumpled state. Smoothing it out on the desk, he commenced reading at a rapid rate; suddenly he stopped,—so did his breath,—then jumped back and upset his stool,—approached his desk again,—took up the printed form and re-read it. ‘No—yes—by jingo it is,’ and in a paroxysm of delight, the draft in one hand and the ruler in the other, he began capering around the office in a most animated manner, at one time fencing with the ruler, and at another waving the paper over his head. A shout from the inner room arrested him, and restored him to a calmer state.

‘Coming, sir,’ shouted Mr. Skeggs, in a tone very unlike that of a delinquent. ‘Gorry, my boy, I’ve got ye this time, by your lordship’s permission. I’ll’—he opened the door and approached the attorney (who had re-seated himself) with a more confident bearing than he had quitted his presence.

‘Well, Mr. Skeggs, you’ve found out by this time that you have made a pretty blunder, and the scrape you have got me into. You’ll have to pay the costs out of your salary, that’s all.’

‘Yes, sir,—I have found it out, sir. There, sir,’ said the excited Skeggs, unable to restrain himself, and in a tone so unlike his usual deferential one, that it caused the lawyer to start and

open his eyes. 'There, sir,—there it is, as plain as plain can be.' He laid the document on the table, pointing to the objectionable paragraph upon which the issue depended.

Mr. Hawkes took up the paper and read, read and read again ; but there it was in his own handwriting. For an instant the attorney appeared crestfallen, but, quickly recovering himself, he exclaimed, 'How unfortunate !' Then, raising his eyes to the ceiling, added, 'Alas ! what fallible mortals we all are ! how liable to err, even the *best* of us !' But, recalled from his meditations, he addressed Mr. Skeggs, with a latent hope of being yet able to relieve himself of a portion of the blame, 'But why did you not correct the mistake ?'

'Because you told me to copy it, *verba-tim literary-atim*. Thereupon the attorney fell into another reverie, in which he mourned over imperfections and shortcomings, and trials incident to dependence on careless clerks ; but, perceiving that the clerk in question was about to put in a further plea of justification, he stopped him by ordering him to go at once and take out a summons 'to show cause why the plaintiff should not have leave to amend his declaration,' and to serve it immediately on the defendant's attorney, at whose sharp practice he expressed himself astonished, but who in reality was only returning a *quid pro quo*, in retaliation for a similar small advantage taken by Mr. Hawkes in a prior action, and which no entreaty could move him to forego ;—thereby exemplifying the adage that 'chickens come home to roost.'

Mr. Skeggs was off like a shot, but on turning the corner of the yard he encountered Mr. Zenas Hawkes, leisurely wending his way to the office, in company with a young gentleman doing business in the same locality. As he rushed on without noticing him, still enjoying the exhilaration of having for once 'been too many' for the old un, the young gentleman's self-esteem was wounded, and, turning round, he shouted after him in an authoritative voice,—

'You, Skeggs !' But as the person addressed continued his progress, he shouted again in a louder tone, which brought him this time to a dead halt, and, perceiving by whom he had been called, after a slight hesitation he returned, muttering words not at all complimentary to his young master.

'Did you not see me when you passed, Skeggs ?'

'See you,—no, sir ; where were you ?'

'You mean to say you did not see me ?—Why did you not ?'

'I don't know. I was thinking of something of more importance, I s'pose.'

Mr. Zenas' friend grinned, as he turned away his head, and Zenas turned red in the face.

'What the mischief do you mean by that impertinence?'

'Nothing, sir,' which was correct, as he would scarcely have ventured to say what his words implied.

'Where are you off to?'

'Judges' Chambers, Chancery Lane.'

'Then, on your return, bring me in a pot of stout, do you hear?'

Mr. Skeggs turned on his heel, and muttered as he went something about getting it himself, it not being his work, but as he only muttered it, he was saved any unpleasant rejoinder.

'Skeggs!' again shouted the young lawyer. Mr. Skeggs faced round. 'Bring me some bread and cheese too.'

Having thus demonstrated his authority, for the special impressment of his friend, and the law stationer's copying clerk who was standing at his employer's shop door, and would not fail to congratulate his friend Skeggs, on the first opportunity, on his having so smart a young governor, Mr. Hawkes, junior, entered the yard, where he bade his friend 'ta, ta,' and conveyed himself leisurely into the office, went through his ordinary employment of looking through the contents of Mr. Skeggs' desk during his absence, and then sauntered into the inner room.

'Hard at it!' said Mr. Zenas, in response to his father's salutation, as he leisurely deposited his cane in a corner, and, after an effort, withdrew his green kid gloves, straightened them out, and laid them on the crown of his hat, which he carefully placed on a chair; then arranged his well pomatoed hair, and adjusted his collar and neck-tie at a small glass on the mantelpiece, and walked over to his father.

'Zenas,' said Mr. Hawkes, in a slight tone of disapproval, 'you are late this morning.'

'Pon honour, couldn't help it; that gallows'—

'Fie, fie, Zenas! don't utter such words in my presence.—Your studies will be interfered with, if you are not more punctual.'

If the junior Hawkes did study law, it must have been somewhere else than at the office.

'Don't be alarmed, dad; I'll do, you'll see, first rate;' and he slapped his thigh by way of confirmation.

'Where were you last night?'—he had returned home after his worthy parents had retired to bed.

'Last night—let me see ;—oh ! ah ! yes ! 'Pon my word, I've so much on my mind with this incessant studying, that I scarcely remember the half I do. Well, I was'—but as it occurred to him that it would not be wise to enter into a detail of his previous evening's doings, he contented himself by adding,—'oh, all sorts of places.'

'But, Zenas,' said his excellent parent, looking at him solemnly and shaking his head, 'I'm afraid some day you'll get into bad company, and you know how that would grieve your mother and myself, who have endeavoured to rear you in the fear and'—

'Oh, never fear, never fear,' said his model son ; 'too well trained not to know how to take care of myself ;—never fear, never fear, old daddy.'

Had Mr. Hawkes been endued with a little more unbiassed discernment, he would have been satisfied of the fallacy of any further anxiety in the direction indicated, and that there was no longer any cause for fear lest it *should* happen, for the Rubicon had long been passed, and he was already walking with alacrity in the counsel of the ungodly ; and, as a consequence, the day was not very distant when he would take his permanent seat among the scornful.

'You know, my son, I have obeyed the command, "Train up a child in the way he should go," and that it is expected at your age, you'll walk in it. Any other course would break your mother's heart, and bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

At the conclusion of this sentence he sighed, and, casting his eyes up to the ceiling, whence he drew a fresh inspiration, was about to resume, but that his worthy son, who had listened to the same discourse in the same language on various occasions, recognised the text, and adroitly turned his anxious parent's thoughts into a more congenial channel.

'That reminds me, sir, I met Captain Lejette last night.'

'Did you—where?'

'Why, at'—but Zenas again recollected that to name the precise place would give anything but a satisfactory illustration of his movements in accordance with his training, and therefore merely said,—'The Strand ; and I reminded him that he was to meet Dr. Scarr at our office to-day.'

'That's it, Zenas, my dear boy ; always, and in all places, let your mind be occupied with such salutary thoughts, and then, when I am consigned to the house appointed for all living, however distant,'—and which the saving clause implied the further distar

the more agreeable and satisfactory,—‘having aided to build up the firm, you will become the sole heir to a lucrative practice.’ Mr. Hawkes paused; this encouraging view acted like a charm on his mind, troubled as it had just been by a less promising contemplation; the idea expressed became the nucleus of a great many kindred ideas, all in the direction of an enchanting future: and, as Mr. Hawkes’ eyes vacantly gazed into that future, or rather at the ceiling, bright visions rose before him, and for a time he was absorbed in a pleasant reverie.

Fearful that his pious father was still studying out the next division of his favourite discourse, the worthy son very undutifully rose from his chair, and endeavoured to disturb his meditations by humming the air of a popular ditty, about ‘not going home till morning;’ which, whilst it had the desired effect of interrupting the paternal vision, oddly enough, at least in the junior’s eyes, must have been mistaken for ‘The Morning Hymn,’ for Mr. Hawkes arose from his recumbent position, and, addressing him with a smile, remarked, ‘It is very gratifying to find you in so serious a mood this morning, my son.’

Zenas was a little discomposed at this communication. Accustomed to his parent’s occasional irony, he imagined that he was about indulging in that pleasant vein, especially as he was feeling anything but serious, the incidents of the last night still occupying a very prominent place in his thoughts. He regarded his father, therefore, with some misgiving, but a moment’s contemplation of his features and manner reassured him, and, reseating himself, commenced an arrangement of his frilled shirt and figured waistcoat, whilst the other continued,—

‘I cannot, my dear boy, but take advantage of your present state of mind, to disclose to you a subject on which your mother and I have been recently dwelling with some anxiety.’

The young man ceased his frontal occupation and began to experience some uneasiness, lest the communication should have reference to his growing habits.

‘In a short time, Zenas, you will be settling in life.’ The attorney paused, and regarded his son with so serious an air, that the young gentleman was now fairly alarmed, and awaited the denouement with trepidation; ‘and though I do not expect you will ever find your mother’s equal,’—Mr. Hawkes shook his head, closed his eyes, and then reopened them and continued,—‘yet it is incumbent you should find one as nearly approaching her as possible.’

'One what, sir?' interrupted the puzzled youth.

'One what! Why, a virtuous, heavenly-minded maiden, who would make you a devoted wife.'

'Wife!' exclaimed the astonished Zenas, as he burst into a loud laugh, that for a few moments prevented his further utterances; 'if that isn't good! What the mischief put that into your head?'

'Zenas, Zenas, my son, I am surprised at your levity on so grave a subject. As the guardians of your juvenile days, it now becomes our duty, as you step from giddy, thoughtless boyhood into the sterner activities of life, with still deeper solicitude to watch and plan for your safety, and to look around and decide for your interests, which, as a guileless young man, you could not be expected to do without danger to yourself and jeopardizing your future happiness. With an eye, therefore, to your temporal, but especially spiritual prosperity, you will not be surprised to learn that we have been looking around.'

At this announcement the countenance of the young gentleman *did* exhibit strong marks of surprise. That such had been the paternal and maternal employment, was a declaration for which he was in no wise prepared. His curiosity, however, as to the success of his enterprising parents, prevailed over every other sentiment, and, looking inquisitively into the senior's face, he awaited the declaration thereof with some impatience.

A bland smile passed over Mr. Hawkes' countenance as he witnessed the interest of his son.

'I don't wonder, my dear boy, at your eagerness to participate in that which affords both your mother and myself so much satisfaction, and rejoice to observe the spirit in which I see you are prepared to receive my communication, and of course yield compliance to our wishes.'

Mr. Hawkes paused, attracted by something in the next office, and rose and opened the door, that had been left on the jar, and looked cautiously round; but as no one was there, he closed it, returned to his seat, and resumed in a lower tone,—

'I trust, my dear boy, in our selection we have been guided by superior wisdom;' his eyes rose involuntarily to the ceiling. 'To choose a helpmeet for the son and heir of a Hawkes, has been a task of no ordinary difficulty; the considerations pressing themselves are very diverse from those occurring to the generality of parents. Your genius, profession, and pre-eminently your virtuous training, entitle you to one of equal worth. Painful,

indeed, would it be to us both, were you so unfortunate as to become allied to a giddy, trifling girl, unable to appreciate those qualities that, we humbly hope, only require the influence of a pious, godly young lady to mature.'

At this description of the contemplated helpmeet, the young gentleman immediately pictured to himself one of the young lady members of the tract society, for whom he had always felt anything but a kindred feeling to that with which he was regarded by them, and under this apprehension felt it his duty to at once remonstrate.

'Come now, daddy. Now, I protest; none of your straight-laced, long-faced distributors; really, now, they're too good.'

'Fie, Zenas, to speak in such terms of such exemplary young ladies.'

'Now, 'pon honour, sir, don't say another word. Now, I—I positively can't; and the excellently trained youth continued to protest, in deprecatory terms, against any such holy alliance.

'Just listen; allow me, Zenas. Though I entirely disapprove such improper language in allusion to those virgins, yet, set apart as they are to a special work, we have no idea or intention of interfering with them.' A feeling of relief came over the younger Hawkes. 'You must have a girl in every way worthy of you.' Zenas bowed, and pulled up his collar and refixed his frills. 'Piety is essential, but alone it is not sufficient; it is not everything.'

'Certainly, quite right,—quite agree with you; very insufficient, I should say.'

'A little of this world's goods is a *sine qua non*—a great adjunct; it enables us to do the good that otherwise would often be beyond our power, and a source of grief to us. Money, my dear boy, is a talent of which we require a due share, wherewith to give expression to our charitable longings. We may have other gifts, but without this we are denied the ability of doing and procuring much that our hearts incline us to.'

Master Hawkes nodded his head, this last view being more in accord with his own; and, instinctively thrusting his hands into his pockets, it was brought more forcibly to his appreciation, the previous night's adventure having eased him of any surplus talents of the kind alluded to.

'And though money is declared to be the root of all evil,—when rightly used, what a world of good it accomplishes, does it not?'

'No disputing that, daddy; it's an uncommon wise saw that. But you forgot,—who's the gal?'

'Don't speak in that flippant way, Zany. There is one obstacle, however,' said he in a musing tone, 'that I don't quite see my way through or feel quite certain of.'

'Whether I'll like her, eh?'

'O no.' For in fact that had not entered into his calculations, nor whether the young lady would become enamoured of the son; to him it had presented itself solely as a matter of speculation. 'No, I fear she has not those religious predilections that would render your union desirable.'

'Has she the blunt?' replied the coarse young man.

'An abundance of that carnal material, and which renders it so regrettable that there should be any lack of the other.'

'Oh, well, we'll not be too hard on the young lady for that. You know it's not often people possess both those excellent qualifications,' said the younger Hawkes, falling for once into his parent's humour.

'I regret to have to confirm your wise remark, Zenas; however, I have well weighed the matter. I remember, when I married your mother, she was a wild, harum-scarum girl. Why, Zenas, you would never have known your mother. I wish you had seen her then. But see what she has become under judicious teaching and example! It was hard work at first, and cost me many a struggle and tear.' Mr. Hawkes sighed, and took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. Returning it to his pocket, and assuming a grateful air, he added, 'But she's right now—right now, thanks to Providence; a most dutiful woman, Zenas, an exemplary wife, and a fond mother.' He began to feel again for his handkerchief, but recovered on perceiving that his worthy son was listlessly examining the endorsement on a brief by his side. 'Zenas,'—the junior looked up,—'it may be your fate to meet the same difficulties, but I have no fear of the result. You have your father's force of character, his patience, his perseverance,—in fact, all those virtues in unison with a prepossessing exterior, so effectual in reducing a fond woman to a meek and lowly wife.'

'But who's the fortunate one, sir?' said the paragon, as this encomium incited him to rise and rearrange his hair at the glass; 'because I'm not going to throw myself away on any and every body. B'lieve you said she had money?—rich?'

'Rich!'

‘And pretty?’

‘Very pretty!’

‘Blue eyes, fair complexion, Grecian nose, light hair, not red? —I ‘bominate red hair.’

‘Beautiful as Hebe, only too light in disposition; but you’ll soon overcome that.’

‘Hope not,’ muttered Zenas. ‘But can’t you tell a fellow who ‘tis;’ and, lifting his foot on to the edge of the table, he commenced pulling the straps that held down his trousers, over his heels, in order that he might bend his legs whilst seated without the risk of splitting that garment at the knees.

‘Ah,’ said the genial parent, rubbing his hands and shaking his head, with as much of a smile as he could afford to cast over so saintly a face,—‘ah, wouldn’t you like to know, now?’ Then, gathering the grey tufts of hair under his chin between his thumb and fingers, he commenced pulling thereat in unison with a simultaneous movement of his grey, dreamy eyes, which now wore a leering expression. ‘Wouldn’t you like to know? Such an angel! If I were only a young man again, I think even Zenas Hawkes wouldn’t get a chance,—ha, ha, ha!’ and he leaned back in his chair, smoothed his very smooth hair, and played with the curly ends.

Although in all probability Mr. Hawkes was only giving expression to some remains of the carnal nature not entirely crucified, yet the main intent, both of this little revival of the old Adam and of the prolonged description, was doubtless to stimulate the young gentleman, and excite his desire to become acquainted with the original.

With the aforesaid design, the voluble senior permitted himself to be unusually carried off, and continued to incite his volatile son by the relation of some very marvellous doings when a gay, thoughtless young dog, before he had seen the vanity of such proceedings. Without, however, staying to record the astounding conquests which had rendered him so remarkable, we content ourselves with stating that he succeeded in completely astonishing his youthful auditor.

Had any other than his hitherto grave parent been narrating those scenes in so jocose a manner, none would have entered more heartily into them than Zenas; but it was altogether so foreign to anything he had ever before witnessed in his exact

solemn father, that it had a contrary effect, and the young
was really so bewildered at the sudden demoralization of

his senior, that he could only listen and regard his antics with amazement.

Their domestic establishment had always been conducted on the sombre, serio-sighing principle, in which to laugh was one of the reprehensible exhibitions of the evil propensities, and merry converse positively wicked. No wonder, then, that the son began to entertain some doubts, especially in view of the very unexpected direction which the senior's thoughts had taken in regard to himself, whether the old gentleman had not drawn the mortification cord so tight that it had at last snapped, and he was running wild in the other direction, entirely losing sight of the proprieties it had been his lifelong aim to inculcate.

At length, somewhat reassured by his father's nearer return to his normal state, he once more suggested that he was still in blissful ignorance of the name or whereabouts of the young lady, or, to use his own expressive language, 'of the angelic being portrayed; but,' he added, 'to whose celestial abode, if she is the divinity you describe, I fear my earthly aspirations, high as they may soar, will fail to raise me.'

'Bravo!' said the really surprised father, who, despite his faith in his heir, had not given him credit for even so commonplace a flight of imagination, which he therefore at once attributed to the skilful way in which he had handled the subject, having thereby succeeded in reproducing his own wit in the noddle of the precious youth. 'Bravo! You'll do, Zany,—you'll do. I see you've something of the old chap in you before the carnal nature died in him; so now I need not hesitate to make you acquainted with the terrestrial surroundings or the celestial nature of your future Dulcinea. Ha, ha! very good! Now be seated, my boy, whilst I put you in possession of the facts of the case.'

Mr. Hawkes, junior, reseated himself, and the attorney, assuming his usual deportment, commenced,—

'As you are aware, the estate of the late Mr. Herbert of Mark Lane, merchant, placed in my hands for settlement, on the recommendation of Dr. Scarr, is in due course proceeding to that end; although I fear it may be some time yet in our hands, as it will become necessary to institute two or three other suits at common law, and it may be, eventually, a Chancery suit, which I regret, having undertaken to wind it up without delay.'

'Well, that *is* a pity,' said the young gentleman, under the impression that he ought to sympathize with the attorney at t

untoward delay, and thereby maintain the prestige he had just gained in his father's estimation.

'Why—why is it a pity?' said Mr. Hawkes, with some surprise.

'Why? Because you are so anxious to keep your promise.'

'Certainly, you are quite right in that view. Slow to promise, but swift to perform,—an excellent maxim, as a maxim, you understand, but not always advisable in practice,—you understand?'

'I twig,' said the intelligent pupil. 'Excellent maxim that, as a maxim, and which means, when properly quoted, "Swift to promise, but slow to perform,"—that's our motto,—ain't it, sir?—and it pays.'

Mr. Hawkes looked at his son, and hesitated whether it did not become him to repeat the axiom as originally propounded; but, on consideration, the new version appeared the wiser reading, especially when, as put by the sagacious youth, connected with the paying clause, and therefore decided to leave it so; in which shape it would probably become stereotyped on the young lawyer's mind and practice, the latter of which would be benefited thereby.

'But what's that to do with the young lady?—let's finish one thing at a time.'

'Excellent advice, Zenas,—at least in theory. I am laying the matter before you in a business, professional manner.'

'Well, spare me, there's a good daddy,' said the young man, becoming impatient at his father's circumlocution. 'We won't talk shop, but come to the point, or, as you say, the subject-matter in hand.'

'Ah, that's it, my boy; I am glad to have such proofs of the result of my teaching. Yes, you see, my son, whenever a case is put into your hands, it becomes your duty to inform yourself of every particular, and to regard it in the various aspects in which it may present itself, in order that you may pursue the course most in the interest of your client, provided always that your own conscience and interests, which should be identical, are not injured thereby.'

'I savvy! Then why don't you put the case into my hands, that I may regard it, or her—beg the lady's pardon!—in her various aspects. Come, my dear dad, do let me know what you're driving at. Who *is* this girl?'

'He, he! Zany, I see, I see, your young blood's up, eh?' and the senior rubbed his hand over his face and chuckled, threatened with another relapse. 'Who it is?—Guess.'

‘Can’t.’

‘Who have we just been speaking of?’

‘Why, you don’t mean to say you want me to stick up to the widow, old Mrs. Herbert?’

‘Good, very good,’ said the admiring parent, tickled at the thought.

‘By Jove! I think it’s very bad. Come, no more larking, dad.’

‘No, no, Zany, not her,—Miss Herbert.’

‘Miss Herbert! Miss Herbert!—Is there a Miss Herbert? What’s she like?’ exclaimed Zenas, becoming more interested.

‘A beauty—a real beauty.’ Mr. Hawkes shook his head, stroked his chin, and appeared to be lost in some beautiful vision, during which Hopeful took a survey of himself, and then stepped over to the glass and settled his collar, returning to his seat satisfied of the impression he was likely to make. ‘I saw her yesterday,’ resumed the attorney, ‘for the first time, whilst waiting on Mrs. Herbert to take instructions relative to matters connected with the estate, and it was whilst so engaged that the young lady entered the room and was introduced, and I made up my mind at once that that was the girl for Zenas Hawkes; and which, having consulted with your mother in the evening, we mutually decided.’

‘What’s her name? Young, pretty, and rich?’

‘Name?—let me remember.’ Then, reaching for the papers over which his son had cast his eye in the earlier part of the interview, he drew out the probate of the will, through which he ran his eye, until he came to the legatees. ‘Bertha,—no, that’s the eldest; Harriet,—that’s it, I remember. She called her Hettie, and informed me she had just returned from boarding-school,—the very place to come from, full of all the romantic notions of the future. So, Zenas, go in and win; play your cards well, and the game’s yours.’

At this stage of the proceedings the outer door was heard to open and close, and, rising to ascertain the cause, Mr. Hawkes, senior, looked into the next room, and, seeing it was the clerk, demanded if he had served the summons. Mr. Skeggs intimated that he had, and that it was all right.

‘Got my lunch?’ said the younger.

‘No, sir.’

‘Then why the devil didn’t you, sir?’

‘Zenas,’ remonstrated his excellent parent, ‘that’s a bad word.’

‘Tarnation! why don’t you do as you’re told?’

Mr. Skeggs muttered something unintelligible, and, slowly taking up his hat, was making for the door.

‘Here! where are you going now? Stop where you are. I’ll go myself and get a chop in the Bury,’ said Mr. Zenas, glad of an excuse to get out of the office. ‘But look out in future, and do what I order you, or it’ll be worse for you.’

Having delivered himself of the foregoing admonitory words for the better regulation of Mr. Skeggs’ conduct, and thereby afforded additional evidence of the rare opportunities of attaining useful knowledge enjoyed by that individual under such joint supervision, Mr. Hawkes junior arranged his white pocket-handkerchief in his outside breast pocket so as to display the borders thereof to advantage, drew on his green kids, and then directed Skeggs to hand him his cane, which he had left on his desk after examination of the inside thereof, on his first entrance. ‘Now you mind what I said.’ Then, opening the door, he descended the stairs, and was soon discussing his chop in the Bury.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PLOTTERS AND PLOTTING.

WITHOUT moving from his position behind the desk, for a few minutes Mr. Skeggs stood eyeing the door with evident tokens of contempt; at length, roused by the attorney slamming the door between the two offices, which had been left on the jar, he walked a short distance from the one through which the young gentleman had disappeared, and, looking at it savagely, put himself into a pugilistic attitude, and commenced projecting first his right leg and then his left, at each alternation making a thrust with his clenched fist, striking sometimes high and sometimes low. The smile that ensued after each blow indicated that it was a success, especially the lower one, which, as he drew rapidly back, he usually followed up by the expression, 'There's a belly-go-fuster,'—a remark, however, that implied that he was not conforming to the rules of the Fives Court.

During this engagement he had gradually approached the door in rather close proximity, and was in the act of delivering the last blow, which was intended to be 'a stunner,' when it flew open, and Mr. Skeggs' intention was fulfilled, as was proved by the force with which his fist came in contact therewith, thereby causing it as speedily to swing to and close. Two effects were the immediate result,—one the application of his knuckles first to his mouth, and then, under pressure, to his armpit, whilst he danced a new figure, accompanied by powerfully stimulated contortions of the features; the other effect was that the unintentional cause of this result to Mr. Skeggs was heard to rush back to the landing and descend two or three steps.

A pause ensued, during which Mr. Skeggs limped back to his stool. A loud voice was heard outside, and then the door was kicked wide open, and presently Captain Lejette entered, looking very cautiously round, exclaiming as he did so,—

'Dem it, what's a matter with the door?' and, taking out his eyeglass, he examined it on both sides, and then turned to Mr. Skeggs for an explanation.

Still smarting from the pain, which he endeavoured to conceal, Mr. Skeggs advanced to assist in the examination, but, after a careful survey, shook his head, and expressed his opinion that there was nothing a matter with the door, except the hinges might want a little oiling.

'Confounded odd!' said the Captain, taking another survey.

'Very,' said Mr. Skeggs, again assisting, and adding the like expression of opinion.

'Mr. Hawkes in his office?'

'Yes, sir; walk in.'

'Dr. Scarr arrived?'

'No, sir, not yet.'

At that moment a footstep was heard at the bottom of the stairs, the door being still open. Going out to the landing to ascertain the cause, the Captain met the surgeon ascending, and called out as he did so,—

'Ah, Doctor, here before you,—always punctual. Take care the door,—something wrong about it!'

'Wrong, wrong—what's wrong? Let me pass,' said the surgeon in a surly tone, as he pushed by the Captain, who made an effort, half in jest, to detain him on the outside.

'Wants oiling,—rather rusty!' said the facetious Captain, winking at Skeggs, as he glanced towards the Doctor.

The clerk having announced and shown the two gentlemen into the inner room, they found the attorney, who prior to their entry had been in a half doze, awaiting their arrival, but deeply abstracted in the perusal of an old parchment deed that he had seized hold of as they entered, and was only recalled from his abstraction therein by the boisterous salutations of the military man, when, starting up with surprise, he begged a thousand pardons, and invited them to be seated.

'Intricate, eh?' said the Captain.

'Very,' replied the attorney. 'Excuse me a moment,' and, returning to the perusal of the deed, he repeated a few lines in a half-audible voice, in which the words 'said hereditaments and premises' appeared to occur somewhat frequently, then marked the word with which he concluded, and, putting the document aside, turned to his clients and said, 'Now, gentlemen, I will attend to you. Much sickness, Doctor?'

'A little, a little. Should have been more prompt, but was detained on my way, having to visit two cases, one of typhus and one of smallpox.'

'Eh!' said the lawyer, instinctively moving his chair back, 'don't you think such complaints are contagious?'

'Decidedly, decidedly,' replied the surgeon quite coolly; whereupon Mr. Hawkes and the Captain moved a little further off, the latter exclaiming as he did so,—

'Dem it, Hawkes!' whilst the former suggested whether they had not better postpone the business to another day.

'Postpone!—what for?' exclaimed the surgeon in a brusque tone. 'What on earth would you postpone it for, when we are all here according to appointment?'

'Are you not afraid, Captain Lejette?' suggested Mr. Hawkes.

'Afraid!' interrupted the surgeon, opening his eyes as he looked from the attorney to the military man; 'who the mischief are you afraid of?'

'No danger of your clothes?'

'My clothes! my clothes! What is a matter with my clothes?'

'Oh, nothing, Doctor! only if smallpox is infectious'—

'Tut, tut, man! have I got the smallpox? And if I had, it would be the worse for me, not for you, who are so much better prepared.'

The lawyer looked towards the ceiling, and sighed.

'Don't be so sad, Hawkes,' said the surgeon; 'you'll keep him of the club foot waiting some time longer yet.'

'Ha! ha! ha!' said the Captain, who was becoming reassured by the surgeon's light manner of treating the matter; 'had you there, Hawkes.'

'He! he!' faintly echoed the attorney. 'Ah, Doctor, I did not expect that from you. I suppose, then, we must proceed to business. Let us see.' And forthwith he commenced a search amongst the bundles of papers around the table, and having, according to precedent, taken up every one but the right, his hand finally rested upon the one docketed '*In re Trelawney Trees*.' The trees were Messrs. Scarr and Lejette, it being the legal contraction for trustees. Mr. Hawkes drew out the same deed that had occupied their attention on the occasion of the Captain's former visit, and turned over each sheet until he came to that portion that defined the nature and provisions o

the trust, which he proceeded to read in a drawling professional tone, the most striking part being the frequent occurrence of the words 'said and aforesaid,' and an occasional 'provided always.'

During this part of the proceedings, the Captain, having lost the connection at the end of the third line, rose and amused himself at the back window, surveying the old high wall that shut out any further view; then he approached the mantelpiece and examined the green wax taper coiled round the brass stand; and wound up by upsetting the wafers in the tin box, which brought him back to his seat, and he commenced an accompaniment to Mr. Hawkes' drone, by striking his boots with the ivory handle of the small whip that he carried in his hand.

At length, his patience exhausted, and lost in the vain endeavour to follow the attorney in his monotonous reading, the surgeon suggested that they leave the 'said aforesaid' and come at once to the point, and that Mr. Hawkes tell them in ordinary vernacular what it all meant.

'Gentlemen, after looking very fully and carefully into the matter, since my last interview with Captain Lejette, I have come to the conclusion that the provisos just read to you are capable of a very favourable construction.'

'To be sure they are!—a very favourable construction. I knew you would discover that;—I knew it, Hawkes!' and he slashed at his boots with renewed energy. 'I'd like to see the daw—or what do you call it, flaw—that would escape a Hawkes' eye. You'd see through a millstone, ole fellow,' said the delighted Lejette.

'But, gentlemen,' said the attorney, putting on a doubtful look.

'Come now, Hawkes, don't spoil it; no *but*s—no but, if you please. Come out like a hero, and lead on! Why, you could drive a coach and six through that,' he struck the parchment with his whip; 'and we'll come to your support, and then I'd like to see who would be a match for the three professions,—law, war, and saw.' The Captain imitated the action of the last-named article by a cutting motion of his whip upon his finger.

'By this deed you have been appointed trustees of the property hereinbefore mentioned, for the sole use and behoof of the party named therein, that is to say, the said—Trelawney; and in the event of certain contingencies therein referred to, then and in that case it shall and may be lawful to and for you, the said trustees, to dispose thereof in the manner following;

that is to say'— Mr. Hawkes had taken up the deed again, and was reading therefrom, when the surgeon interposed, and exclaimed remonstratingly,—

'Now, Hawkes, spare us—spare us!'

'Spare us, good Hawkes,—spare us!' drawled out the Captain, making sundry cuts at a bluebottle fly that was whizzing around his perfumed locks.

'Gentlemen, I am anxious that you should understand the technicalities through which I have waded to the conclusion arrived at, and by which you would comprehend with me how it can be defined to mean'—

'What it does mean, undoubtedly. We see it, Hawkes, with half an eye; it's as plain as the nose on your face, now you explain it. If ever I get into a scrape, Hawkes, and want to prove I did not say what I did, I'll employ you; so you'll consider yourself retained, ole fellow;' and thereupon, by way of emphasis, he struck the table with his whip. 'But where did you get all your wisdom?'

'Oh,' said the vulnerable attorney, 'I don't pretend to any extra wisdom, but such as I possess is the result of years of hard, patient study, coupled with experience, and an avowed purpose of mastering the subtleties of language.'

The learned man shook his learned head.

'Amazing! is it not, Doctor?' said the military man, repressing a smile.

'Very,' said the gentleman addressed; 'wisdom will die with him.'

'But such studies require to be pursued under superior guidance, lest the intellectual expands at the expense of the moral,' added the attorney.

'What a blessing,' said the Captain, with as serious a face as he could command, 'that there has been one found possessed of so much self-abnegation as to be able to resist the baleful influence!'

'Gentlemen, I claim no praise. I arrogate not the credit of genius; it's a gift—a supernatural gift.'

There had been such a blending of the ridiculous with the serious in these last remarks, that the surgeon could not resist the humour—the temptation to add thereto a sentence in his own sarcastic vein.

'Supernatural gift! Right! you've rightly defined it. Never originated with man,—it came from beneath. Was not the first flaw ever brought to light discovered by Eve's counsel?'

The lawyer started.

'Bravo ! bravo !' said the military man, quite amused at the unusual part taken by the surgeon in such discourse ; and added, 'Then the devil was the first lawyer. 'Pon honour, Doctor, you are better versed in theology than I thought.'

'Dr. Scarr,' said the attorney, not at all comfortable at a conclusion that placed him in such equivocal and repudiated society, 'I object to such allusions.'

'And so do I,' said the Captain. 'It's not fair ; it's against Hawkes' principles to speak ill of friends in their *absence*.' This little speech displayed a slight deficit in the military man's theology. 'After all, however, I really think the Tory belonged to the medical faculty.'

'How so ?' said the surgeon.

'Why, did he not prescribe an apple to'—

'Gentlemen,' interposed the scandalized lawyer, 'I cannot suffer such conversation to continue ; my office is not the place for such jesting. Excuse me, but you know my aversion to such.'

'Beg pardon,' said the loquacious Lejette. 'Well, then, we are to understand that you'll raise the money on the property ; and as money is very much wanted at this moment, at least by one of the aforesaid trustees, you'll lose no time in completing the business.'

'Then, gentlemen, I have your authority to raise the money under the *clause* referred to ?'

'Precisely. That's it,—is it not, Doctor ?'

'What ?' said the gentleman appealed to, who had been revolving in his mind a suitable repartee to the reflection just shifted from the legal to the medical profession, and had therefore not heard the remark.

'Why, what Hawkes says,—he has our authority to put his *claws* on the money at as early a date as possible ?'

'Undoubtedly,' replied the Doctor.

'I need not remind you, gentlemen, of the exertion, time, and trouble all this demands, and that, amongst such a pressure of important business, it will necessitate some sacrifice on my part to meet your wishes.'

'Beyond all doubt ; and we shall quite appreciate such sacrifice at its real value,' replied the surgeon, with a significant look at the attorney, and laying a stress on the last words.

'To—be—sure ; certain—ly,' chimed in the Captain,—'at its real value. *Vous savez, mon garçon.*'

The lawyer involuntarily smiled in recognition of the term used, and, having repeated his assurance of early attention to the matter, the clients rose to take their departure.

'By the by, Hawkes, with reference to our arrangement about that boy,' said the surgeon, 'have you made Lejette acquainted with our proposal?'

'Well thought of,' remarked Mr. Hawkes.

'What's that?' said the Captain,—'no more buts, I hope?'

'Why,' said the attorney, 'after maturely weighing matters, and seeing the time is approaching when that boy must be put to some business or profession, whereby he may hereafter be off your hands, we have decided, unless you offer any objection, that he is to be articled to the Doctor, on payment of a premium.'

'Capital idea!—no objection whatever. You've saved me a great deal of anxiety on that score,—a subject I've tried thus far to stave off, and avoid the consideration of' (the anxiety and the consideration were about on a par). 'Glad you've relieved me so well of the perplexity. Capital idea, Doctor. But, on second thoughts, don't you think he'll be too near?'

'On the contrary, I am of opinion the more he is under our own eye the better,' said the surgeon.

'A Draco and an Esculapius! Messieurs Hawkes and Scarr for an idea! Well, really I am obliged to you, and *so* disinterested too! But, Doctor, it's a great responsibility. What could induce you to accept it?' An idea was being incepted also in the idle brain of the military man, who was too well acquainted with his impecunious friend not to suspect something more than mere precaution was instigating him.

'Regard—regard to an old friend, as was his father, and the boy's good,—nothing else.'

'Except the premium,' chimed in the military man, with an affected chuckle, and thrusting the handle of his whip into the lawyer's ribs. 'Don't forget to charge that, Hawkes, to the account.'

'The premium would be but a small consideration in a matter so important to *both* of us,' said the surgeon tartly, and opening his eyes full on the Captain, who thereupon, though not silenced, was a little disconcerted.

'I see it all. I retract; quite a mistake,—purely disinterested. Doctor, since you've become so intimately associated with our mutual friend here,' turning towards the lawyer, and affecting to

regard him through his eyeglass, 'you have turned pious too,—quite a philanthropist. Well,' breathing a pretended sigh, crossing his hands, and looking up at the ceiling, he added in a drawling tone, 'I only wish I was half as good. Heigh-ho ! a *rara avis*. I see it, a couple of saints of the first water.'

'Thank you,' said the surgeon sarcastically ; 'your penetration accredits your praise.'

'Well, ta, ta ; I must be off, for if I stay any longer I'll catch the complaint. Pray for me, brethren. *Addio*, gentlemen ;' and the reckless man of the world ambled out of the office, enjoying his awkward though severe jibe, and leaving the two more serious, but not less heartless, plotters to their further plottings.

'Sad creature that,' said the attorney, as the two resealed themselves ; 'he will go to the dogs yet. What a misfortune that he can't be more serious. I am afraid his extravagance will ruin himself, and'—he stopped as though hesitating to express a thought that he would fain have dismissed, but which would not go until uttered, so he added solemnly,—'the whole of us.'

'The whole of us ! the whole of us !' reiterated the surgeon, with surprise. 'How could he do that ?'

'How ! there's no saying exactly how. But who's safe in the power of a spendthrift, whose mode of life creates a constant demand that would exhaust the treasures of Croesus himself.'

'Demand—demand ! who's the Croesus from whom he is to demand ?'

'You,' said the attorney, with a promptness unusual to him, but with the intention of making an impression.

'Me !' iterated the surgeon,—'me !—I the Crtesus ! Ruin me ! I don't understand ; you speak in riddles. Explain, sir.'

'Oh, well, we will not dwell on so unpleasant a subject. I was only speaking by way of caution. It's a failing of mine that,—over cautious, I fear, at times, especially when moved by influences, too ominous to question their source, to contemplate the coming cloud which, though small in its rising, is deepening and spreading as it advances.' Mr. Hawkes was becoming abstracted in the vision which, as his eyes peered up to the corner of the ceiling, he appeared to be peering into.

The dreamy tone and position of the attorney seemed for the moment to affect the surgeon, and, with drooped lids, he too leaned back on his chair, and ruminated on the warning utterances he would fain despise, and yet felt were not to be so treated. Unpleasant consequences might arise in the direction

indicated, but that he should have anything to fear from one whom he regarded more as a pliant tool than an object for the slightest cause of alarm, appeared preposterous: he was not only himself too involved, but he was of too volatile a disposition to either concoct or abet any plot to their injury; if such resulted through any action of his, it would be more likely to arise from accident or blundering on his part.

The attorney was not slow to perceive the effect of his words, and deemed it prudent to leave him a while to his uninterrupted cogitations. As they continued rather long, he concluded, with some satisfaction, that they were subduing the stern, self-willed man to a state in which he could better influence and move him to his own purpose, but in this conclusion he was disappointed. A witty authority has cautioned us to 'beware of a man with half-shut eyes,' adding 'he's not dreaming,' and which aphorism was specially applicable to the surgeon on this as in similar states of mind.

The surgeon rose from his inclined position, and in a sharp, angry tone, that effectually dispelled the pleasant anticipations of the attorney, exclaimed, 'Well, sir, I have been waiting for the explanation.'

'I am sorry,' replied the disappointed lawyer, 'that your own intuition has not suggested to you a better solution than I could give; but I would only further observe that the present state of the exchequer will no longer meet his incessant demands.'

'Stop the supply—stop the supply, and that instantly.'

'Stop the supplies? No intervention of ours is needed to effect that. But when that occurs, as it must speedily—the attorney shrugged his shoulders.

'Well, what then—what then?' said the surgeon impatiently.

'What then?—Oh, nothing. I may be wrong—I hope I am. But did you never hear of a man, grown desperate, threatening, and having to be bought off again and again?'

'Oh, is that all?—leave that to me. I understand him,' said the surgeon, in a tone that implied perfect confidence in his own tactics. 'You have nothing to fear, Hawkes, on that head.'

'I!' exclaimed the lawyer, with affected surprise,—'I was not thinking of myself.'

'Very disinterested,—very.'

'Undoubtedly!—Dr. Scarr, I must remind you, as I have done on other occasions, that I act solely as your and Captain Lejette's legal adviser.'

‘Certainly, certainly,—just so, just so. I comprehend,—a conscience clause, eh?—and share in the benefits arising from the advice.’

‘Not at all, Doctor. I am remunerated for my professional services; and it is my duty to act for the best interest of my clients,—quite another matter from my duty as an individual and a Christian.’

‘Indeed!—making sure of both worlds! Wiser than many. For myself, I’m content to live for this, and which I find difficult enough without taking more on my shoulders. The world, sir, owes me a living, and,’ he exclaimed with emphasis, ‘I mean to have it. Mr. Hawkes, I’m not to be frightened from my purpose, so you’ll proceed as cautiously as ordinary prudence commends, for all our sakes. No prevarication, sir,’ seeing the attorney was again about to enter his protest. ‘I have just given you my caveat how to proceed. You can adopt that or a bolder course, as you deem best, seeing it is more in your province to decide the *modus operandi* than mine. I am fully sensible of your ability and of your disposition; so in whatever way you may choose to reconcile the proceeding as to your own share of responsibility in the matter, it is of no moment to me, though I must confess it to be a sophism beyond my comprehension; but if it afford you consolation, I am not desirous to abate it. I don’t envy you. But if I may form an opinion, from your continued anxiety as well as effort to divide yourself, I should argue that you are occasioning yourself an immense amount of unnecessary trouble, and with very debateable success. But a truce to all this. What I intended to say when I commenced this tirade, and for which I claim your indulgence, was, go on with the disposition of the property as arranged, keeping matters as straight as circumstances will permit.’

During this not very assuring address, uttered in a tone and manner that betokened, with an intelligent view of the situation, an inflexibility of purpose, Mr. Hawkes had listened with nervous irritation; but, cowed by the stern gaze fixed on him during its delivery, and experiencing a sense of relief at its conclusion, he merely sighed and raised his eyes to their wonted refuge, but which must have failed him, as they instantly fell upon the desk, and he mechanically ran them over the parchment lying thereon.

‘Hawkes,’ said the surgeon in an altered tone and manner, ‘I think we will have to defer any further action with regard to the

removal of that boy from school for the present : what think you ?'

'Under the circumstances, it will be advisable to do so,' said the subdued man, slightly encouraged by the surgeon's changed demeanour.

The surgeon rose, and was about taking his departure, when, with some hesitancy, the attorney said in as pleasant a tone as, smarting under the recent severe discourse, he could command, 'Doctor, I am desirous of speaking to you on another subject,—a subject of some importance to myself and family.'

The surgeon looked at his watch, intimated he had but a few minutes to spare, and re-seated himself, depositing his hat and gloves on the table.

'I am not going to trouble you with other people's business, but by way of introduction to the topic in which I wish to enlist your friendly offices, I would mention that I am getting on with the settlement of the Herbert estate.' Pushing the Trelawney papers aside, he reached over for the red-taped bundle made up of the papers relating to the business named.

'Glad to hear it. Been a long time in hand.'

The attorney looked appealingly at the surgeon, but deemed it prudent to let the observation pass, lest any inopportune remark of his might militate against the enterprise in embryo.

'I waited on Mrs. Herbert a few days since on questions connected with some suits that should be instituted.'

'Doesn't look like winding up.'

Mr. Hawkes stopped, and was about to justify himself, but refrained for the same reason as before.

'Ahem ! Whilst with that lady, her youngest daughter came into the room, and'—the quick and searching glance of the surgeon disconcerted him,—'and'—

'What then ?' exclaimed the medical man.

'Nothing ; only it occurred to me it was a great pity that such an estimable family should be without a male protector.' This was said in a commiserating tone.

'Ah ! yes, yes. And in the exuberant goodness of your heart—always distinguishing between your two characters of lawyer and saint—were revolving how you could become their guardian, and make the young lady a ward in Chancery. Excellent man !'

'Now, Doctor, you are too severe. I trust I can disclaim any such sordid motive on this occasion. But it has since occurred

to me that if the young lady could be mated to a suitable husband, what a comfort and blessing it might prove to the family.'

'Philanthropic man, Hawkes! there'll be a great blank when you are struck off the roll.'

The lawyer experienced a cold chill.

'But don't you concur, Doctor?'

'I concur?—it would be more to the purpose to obtain the concurrence of the young lady herself.'

'Is she fickle?'—'Is she engaged?'—'Hard to approach?'—As the surgeon shook his head in response to each of these queries, he continued, 'Then I apprehend no difficulty; for, granted one answering to her ideal, what girl does not naturally incline to the other sex?'

'Umph! Who would have imagined so celestial a being knew so much of the human side of nature? But be brief, my dear sir, as time is pressing, and you and I are past the romance of life.'

'Well, then, what think you of—of Zenas?'—Mr. Hawkes was interrupted by a cough.

'Zenas!—your son Zenas!' said the surgeon, surprised and amused.

'And why not?' replied the lawyer, a little nettled at the surgeon's manner. 'Young, not bad looking, gentlemanly, a profession, and well brought up;—and in fact, in my opinion, in every way calculated to make her an excellent husband.'

The surgeon smiled, shook his head, and closed his eyes; then, looking up at the attorney, said, 'Did you have any conversation with the young lady?'

'Nothing more than a few commonplace remarks, on my introduction.'

'Then take *my* advice this time, and for which I'll make no charge,—give it up, dismiss the thought,—there's no chance.'

'No chance!' exclaimed Mr. Hawkes, his *amour propre* a little piqued.

'No chance—no chance, Hawkes! Know something of the young lady's disposition, and, rely upon it, there's not the remotest chance.'

'Perhaps, sir,' said the lawyer, his vanity peering out a little from its hiding-place, 'as much as some others;' and then, in a spirit which at the commencement of the conversation he had the apparent mastery of, he said, 'It may be you speak interestedly, Doctor?'

‘Sir,’ said the surgeon, looking severely at the attorney, ‘I don’t understand you.’

‘Oh, nothing; only if Dr. Scarr has a particular interest in some other person, whom he has engaged to favour, why, then, of course I understand how there can be no chance in *his estimation* for a son of Mr. Hiram Hawkes.’

‘You may spare your sarcasm, sir. You are mistaken for once; though correct in the surmise, that if I had any interest therein, there would be *no* chance.’ This was said with a cool and careless air; then added,—‘However, not having been solicited for my interest on behalf of any one in particular, I have never given the thing a passing thought.’

‘Thank you, sir, for being so explicit,’ immediately responded the lawyer, with some tact, vexed with himself for his indiscreet exhibition of temper, and still hoping to bring the intractable man over to his view. ‘Then, am I assuming too much, my dear sir, in flattering myself that I could obtain, on behalf of my son, an influence that I know would not be exerted in vain.’

‘Dependent on circumstances,’ replied the mollified man, ‘and the conditions imposed.’

The lawyer comprehended his meaning, and continued, ‘Of course, Doctor, I should not ask that influence without expecting to give some expressive tangible proof of the extent of my appreciation thereof.’

The surgeon drew back his head, and scanned the features of the lawyer for a second, his keen little eyes reading him through. At the conclusion whereof he said,—

‘Hawkes, what’s your terms?’

‘Then you’ll assist me, Doctor?’

‘Provided it’s worth my while; and as every man has his price,—that is, who is not a saint,—you, of course, would be prepared to pay mine.’

‘If not too exorbitant. But you may rely on me, you will be no loser.’

‘Too indefinite—too indefinite.’

‘Leave it to my honour.’

‘I’d prefer better security.’

The lawyer made an effort to smile, and then appeared to be thinking.

‘Add one thousand to the amount coming to me as my share of the proceeds of the Trelawney property,’ said the unscrupulous surgeon.

'One thousand! Why, Doctor, the girl isn't'—

'No higgling, Hawkes, or that ends the negotiation.'

'Couldn't you say eight hundred?—though I had not expected even to give that.'—The surgeon shook his head.—'Nine then? Really it's a large amount, and that's the extent'—

'Hawkes, you know better,—you know by the will the amount coming to the girl as her portion; and that on second thoughts brings me to the consideration that I have asked too little, and therefore will not take less than'—

Fearful he was about to increase the amount, the lawyer hurriedly exclaimed, 'Agreed, then,—a thousand.'

'I was about to name a larger sum, but as you have accepted before I did so, I will abide by my offer;—a little ruse, however, on the part of the surgeon. 'In what way do you expect my co-operation? Has the young lady seen your son, or know you have one?'

'No.'

The surgeon closed his eyes, and, after a brief reverie, opened them again, and said, 'So much the better. You'll put the young gentleman entirely into my hands.'

'Entirely,' said the elated lawyer. 'And how do you propose to begin?'

'I don't undertake that the young lady shall become Mrs. Zenas, mind.'

'I understand, Doctor, you undertake to promote and urge the suit, and from your influence I have no doubt of the issue. Zenas is a chance for any girl, but, backed by so astute and persevering—and I may add interested—a friend, I have no misgivings for the result. Commend me Dr. Scarr for his influence with the fair sex.' Whereupon the staid Mr. Hawkes positively applauded with his hands, and laughed outright.

The surgeon made a slight bow in acknowledgment, and, rising, observed, 'You can drop me a line and inform me when it will be convenient to commence operations; or stay, I'll let you know, and in the meantime you can forward me a written undertaking respecting the thousand.'

'It shall be attended to, and I leave it in your hands, and a kind Providence.'

'Providence will have nothing to do with it,' said the surgeon, and he was right. 'I'll do it myself;—there he was wrong.'

Perfectly of accord, and with that unanimity which two men thoroughly understand one another, in a bargain of mutual

profit, would be likely to experience, the plotters took a hearty leave of each other, without a scruple or a blush.

The surgeon had scarcely closed the door, before dulcet strains might have been detected by Mr. Skeggs issuing from the inner sanctum,—that is, if Mr. Skeggs had a sensitively musical ear; but as that gentleman's ear was rather dull in that particular, he fancied instead that he heard himself called, and shouted in reply, 'Coming, sir,' in no musical voice either. As he opened the door, Mr. Hawkes was concluding the second line of the doxology to the tune of the Old Hundred, moved thereto by an excess of spirits, occasioned by his present and anticipated success.

'Mr. Skeggs,' said the lawyer, stopping short, not caring to invite that person to join him in his ascriptions of praise, but speaking under the soothing influence of the beautiful words and tune, 'everything going on right in the office?'

At first surprised, and then charmed at the soft tone and bland smile that accompanied these words, Mr. Skeggs replied, 'Everything, sir.'

'That's right; take care, now, you never make such a mistake again. I know, in a large practice like ours, these things will sometimes occur; only let it be a lesson to you in future.'

Mr. Skeggs did not feel so amiable as at first.

'You must keep a sharp look-out for these attorneys,—they are very tricky. We would scorn to take such advantage. Ah! ever observe that maxim, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," Mr. Skeggs. The *precepts* learned in this office will be invaluable to you in after life.'

The privileged clerk nodded his head in token of his appreciation thereof, but in doing so knocked against an idea that flitted through his brain, 'What about the *practice*?' but, being irrelevant, it speedily flew out again.

'You see the consequence of the defendant's attorney not acting in accordance with such rule; it necessitates our having to impress it on him, by pouncing down upon him on the very first opportunity, whereby he will learn its value. Hard to teach some people, Mr. Skeggs.'

To the latter's small mind the consequence predicated was, if not a logical, at least a legal sequence; while, in reference to the teaching, there was a mistiness about it that prevented his apprehending it quite as clearly; however, it was in accordance with precedent, and therefore must be right.

CHAPTER XIX.

GRUMBLEBY HALL.

THE exterior of Grumbleby Hall was by no means a reflection on its pretentious name, which, except in a slight and needful alteration in its orthography, was not of recent origin. The building had borne that designation, probably, from the date of its erection. In this respect it had the advantage of the numerous competing establishments, its title not having been adopted for effect.

About a mile distant from the village near which the Hall was situated, the road, after passing over a wooden bridge spanning the river Greta, ran along a small common or green, opening to the right. At the upper end or side of the common, parallel with the road, and occupying the entire space, were the premises bearing the above appellation. A stone wall, extending the whole length, and running some distance along an upper road, enclosed the front thereof. The main building, standing in the centre, facing the common, was built of cut and faced stone, and two story high, with moderate-sized windows and spacious entrance. To judge from its style of architecture, as well as the arrangement of its accessories, it was probably erected at the earlier part of the last century, and had been the seat or mansion of some wealthy landowner and proprietor of the surrounding demesne.

Directly in front of the house, between it and the enclosure wall, was a large garden, shut in at either end by high walls, against which peach, apricot, and other vines and trees were trained. It had formerly been laid out with some taste, as evidenced by the direction of the walks, not improbably trodden by many a gallant and many a high-born dame, at that season of the year when aromatic flowers and shrubs and luscious fruit invited them from the metropolis or nearer towns to luxuriate

in rustic festivities, and throw aside artificial restraints for natural graces. But now, overgrown and choked with briar and thistle, here and there a struggling flower striving to outgrow the rank weeds in which it was embedded, it had descended to meaner use, portions only being cultivated for the purpose of supplying the culinary department of the establishment with esculents.

On either side the main building, within the enclosure, were, at one end, the stable, barn, and other outhouses, and at the other the school-house and its adjuncts. The room above the school served the double purpose of a granary, and a depository of surplus boots and shoes, of which there was a large stock. The ascent to it was by stone steps from the outside. By the side of these steps were half-a-dozen others, descending to a brick furnace by which the school-room was heated. An extensive, irregular-shaped playground afforded ample space for its purpose. The ordinary entrance for members of the household and neighbours, or casual visitors, was by the out-building end, through a sort of courtyard, the boys being limited to the gate opening from the playground on to the upper road.

The interior of the Hall, except in the immediate centre entering from the garden, detracted from the impression conveyed by its external elevation, being ill arranged, probably arising from alterations made to adapt it to its present use. From the playground, on an angle of which the building at the rear looked out, a door entered into a lean-to, a recent addition, used as a wash-house and bakery; at the further end thereof was the door opening into the eating-room; whilst on the left was the entrance to the kitchen, from one corner of which a dark passage led to the further end of the building, passing on the left a stairway leading down to an underground store-room for edibles; on the right hand it opened on to the spacious front hall, on either side of which were equally spacious rooms. From this hall a grand staircase led up to the first landing, forming a corridor conducting into the rooms appropriated to the principal, teachers, and other officials of the establishment; thence another flight led up to the next floor, terminating on a narrower landing, leading into the bed-rooms appropriated to the boys, which extended the whole length of the building, and from which, for wise reasons, every door had been removed, except one on the immediate left of the landing, having no connection with the rest, known as the store-room, and always kept locked.

At the further end of the passage before alluded to as passing

the hall from the kitchen, was a gloomy entry, into which the door from the out-buildings and yard opened. The only room in connection with this that we shall stop to mention, was the one on the right of said entry ; this was the sitting-room or parlour, and appropriated to the parlour boarders. Another lean-to abutted on this end of the building, extending also into the playground. A crazy flight of steep, winding steps, starting from the corner of its entrance, led to a dark attic, one of the apartments in which was used as a bread-store, and under lock and key. It was through the passage of this lean-to that the boys passed on their way to their bed-rooms. Leaving the parlour at an angle on the left, and crossing the entry aforesaid, they ascended a narrow flight of stairs, which landed them on the floor of the first of the four apartments forming their dormitory, each of which must be traversed to reach the next.

The playground, as before stated, was large, situated on the school-house side of the premises, as well as running back of the main building ; it must have comprised a few acres, since, though not actually set apart for the purpose, an adjoining field, known as the calf-garth, was in constant use for all special games, such as base-ball, chevy, shinty, or any sport requiring extra space. Through one portion of this field, descending from afar, meandered a laughing little brook, or, as provincially termed, 'beck,' whose gurgling, limpid water wobbled and babbled over its pebbly bed, until, dammed by interposing clods piled up by some playful boy, it turned aside ; or, bearing off in triumph the accumulated rubbish, it once more glided swiftly on, until, again arrested by some stronger blockade, it rose, over-leaped the barrier, and dashed murmuring away ; arrived at the wall, it passed thereunder into the lower end of the playground, crossing a tongue thereof. Again it flowed under an opposite wall, whence it issued and sped on through fields and ravines in tortuous windings, until, with increased volume, it plunged and lost itself in the Greta. A useful, delightful little beck it was,—a desideratum. There the thirsty stripling, overcome by the midday heat, or reeking from the hard-pressed race, lay down by its side full length, and drew up the cool, refreshing draught, unless perchance he preferred from hollowed palm to imbibe the crystal water. And there, too, at earlier hour, he performed his morning's ablution, whether on warmest summer day or winter's coldest morn, stripped to his waist ; and, as dirt might be assumed to have affinity for dirt, unable to obtain

their turn at the small allowance of soap, the lesser lads rake up in handfuls the slimy sediment from the bottom, and therewith strive to coax away the surplus stock overlaying their well-grimed skin. Moreover, this beck was the source of endless amusement. There the tyro shipbuilder launched his first (keelless) bark, made of chip pointed at both ends, carrying paper sail stuck on splintered mast, and watched with glee its swift course as it hurried on to far-off imaginary lands, whilst in advance the threatened impediment was hastily removed, that creates a miniature maelstrom, out of which, if not engulfed, it shot close by some impending rock, barely escaping wreck, and passed safely under the boundary wall into the ocean on the playground side, but only at last to be ruthlessly destroyed by some bigger boy, who has been watching through a hole in the rubble masonry, and now spitefully hurls the destructive missile, and leaps on the wall to crow over his unkindly act. Higher up, enticed through some side cut, a little stream is flowing on, until presently it falls on some rudely-shaped wheel, modelled after that down at the mill on the Greta, that slowly turns in connection with another inside a small stone-built parallelogram, dignified by the name of the Greta mills,—the whole the work of many a busy hour; to be in its turn demolished as was the merchant ship, by some open or covert foe, in whom the bump of malice or destructiveness is strongly developing. But to narrate the endless purposes to which the fertile geniuses of this classic seminary turned the little beck, would exhaust our pages and the reader's patience; and yet we linger, as there rises to our view the Izak Waltons of the future, who, with wriggling worm on bent pin, attached by thread to the crooked stick, fished for minnows that swarmed in the deeper, broader bed, or hole under the shade of the wall at the upper side of the garth, and there first learned to angle.

Run on, little brook! With a sigh an old boy turns from you as he recalls the sportive companions with whom he once mingled in busy play upon your tiny banks. Long ere this, borne on a more irresistible stream, gliding, sweeping, rushing over many an opposing barrier into life's ocean, driven upon its hidden rocks, ploughing into its treacherous quicksands, or heroically daring its tumultuous waters, regardless of warning breakers beating on iron-bound coasts, some have foundered, some been dashed to shivers, others gone down in sight of the struggled-for haven, whilst only one here and there has been

drifted safely to the shore, there left for a season until the sculler shall come to ferry them too to the regions beyond. Perchance, before he come, this book may fall into the hands of such, and in Willie Wilton they may recognise a schoolmate, and live over again those scenes of which this story is no exaggerated elaboration, but a truthful portrayal of a life perhaps only realized at a Yorkshire boarding-school. Although time, that lends a softening charm to the long ago, may in their memories have toned down some of the ruggedness of those days, and obliterated many of their harsher lineaments, especially when obscured by the more indelibly impressed, exciting adventure or vivid deeds of daring, associated with well and distinctly recalled fellow-helpers of their pleasures or sharers of their sorrows, nevertheless they will agree that not a chapter recording that school life has overstepped the reality, and every incident narrated actually transpired within the period they comprise.

That portion of the playground upon which, as stated, the main building abutted in the rear, was studded with tall pine trees, and was termed the rookery,—another corroboration of the ancient importance of the Hall. Tall and stately, not a bough protruded from one of those trees until some fifteen or sixteen feet from the ground, when they sent forth their branches so profusely, that they formed an almost effectual canopy to the exclusion of sunlight below. But what music floated on the invisible tops of those old giants, as rook cawed to rook, and told of the two capacious-mouthed fledglings nestled at his feet, in that strongly-built, rude-looking heap of sticks, defying alike storm of wind or torrent of rain above, or the efforts of plunderers below? Mark how paterfamilias cocks his eye and gazes stoically down on the pigmies below, and croaks as he sways to and fro on topmost bough, enjoying the fruitless efforts of some inexperienced boy to climb the trunk of the stately tree, and who, when just within reach of the nearest branch, ignominiously slides down with scratched hands and legs and torn breeks. And now, all safe, he is off in company to a well-known field, there to forage for their charge, to the disgust of the farmer, who in his wisdom regards his real friend as a destructive pest, and charitably strives to direct his steps to his neighbour, by the strange device of an old coat fastened to a pole, surmounted by a brimless hat. But, watched by the old rook jauntily see-sawing on the distant elm, and winking to his mate perched on a lower bough, the sapient

artist has scarcely withdrawn before he swoops down from his post, and, advancing by wary approaches, finally lights on the terrible scarecrow, and summons his partner to pursue her grubbing.

Every boy was proud of that rookery. It left the kindred establishments far behind, and confirmed their pretensions to superiority. But when the eventful day came for the 'slaughter of the innocents,' and the astounded rooks awoke from their dream of security to discover that there were other and readier means of getting at pine tops than by climbing, then the Grumbleby boys were elated beyond measure as they joined in the exciting sport. What a deafening noise! What consternation and commotion! Never were boasters more wofully undeceived as on rook-shooting day. In vain every art known to the corvine tribe was essayed to tempt the 'new-fledged brood' to trust to wing and seek some safer retreat. Rooklet after rooklet came tumbling down, the victim of misplaced confidence. Kearas senior, as well as junior, was a dead shot. One here and there essayed to hold on, as, with broken wing or leg, it descended more slowly, but, reaching the ground at last, vainly started off for a run with piteous croaks, as they were pursued by a score of boys, who in their eagerness fell headlong over each other, and the poor little fellow was flattened to a pancake. Right merry sport for boys, but sorry work for rooks. And so it ended with mourning and desertion for a season, until Time, the healer, calls back the banished, re-stocks the old grove, and it becomes as vocal as ever.

Prolix as the foregoing description is, it could scarcely have been curtailed, without rendering some of the events to be hereafter narrated as occurring within these bounds, less comprehensible.

On the night of the boys' arrival at the Hall, after having been duly attended to, they were ushered to their sleeping apartment by way of the grand staircase, a privilege accorded to new boys only. To the two equestrians this was no pleasant operation, for every muscle and sinew appeared to have become tightened, and their little bodies excoriated so that the ascent was accomplished with painful contortions, as they dragged themselves up by the help of the banisters. The apartment into which they were conducted was the afore-mentioned store-room. The shelves were garnished with a motley collection of boxes, trunks, toys, and other articles, so covered with cobwebs and dust as to render

their description uncertain ; whilst scattered around the floors were boys' clothing, both woollen and linen, and in one corner boots and shoes.

Their attendant was an awkward-looking object, with a dull, melancholy aspect ; his hair smoothed flat over his forehead and ears imparted a sanctity to his expressionless face ; his deformed limbs conveyed the idea of going backwards at every step. He was habited in an old, well-worn, brown tailed coat, and trousers to match. As they entered the room, he walked over to a small pile of clothing and seated himself thereon, his eyes dreamily fixed on the candle, as he held it on his knees. The effort to divest themselves of their garments elicited more than one faint cry, as they first sat on the ground and then on the edge of the short-posted bedstead, regarding at times the unsympathetic being before them, in the vain hope of catching his eye and enlisting his aid ; but each time, with the instinct of their age, they shrank from the leaden glance occasionally thrown on them. At length, in a querulous tone, he requested to be informed ' if he was to stay there all night ; ' whereupon the two appealed to the elder for his assistance, and by his help eventually crawled into bed, without venturing a further look at their uncouth attendant, who, also without deigning another word or look, retired from the room, the door of which they heard him fumbling at for a minute or two after, and then lock.

As the sound of the footsteps of the queer individual died away on the staircase, the boys crept under the clothes without uttering a word, and soon were occupied each in his own sad thoughts, until those thoughts forced themselves into utterance.

' Are you asleep, Willie ? '

' No ; are you ? ' Then turning towards him, the first speaker, the younger boy, said in a whisper,—

' I wish I was home ; don't you ? '

' Yes,' said Willie.

' I'll write mother and tell her I want to come home,' said the other.

Willie did not reply, but lay wondering who he would write to, until, overcome by fatigue, they were just falling off to sleep, when they were aroused by a noise that occasioned them to huddle closer together. After listening a few moments without hearing anything further, the elder ventured to uncover and raise his head, and look hurriedly into the room. The moon was shining through the uncurtained window, and its pale light fell

upon a pile of clothing in the opposite corner, which his fears instantly metamorphosed into the figure of the strange man who had just seen them to bed.

'O my!' said the lad, as he buried his head under the clothes, 'there he is again.'

'Who?—who?' exclaimed the other two in a breath.

'Him,' said the other; 'just look!'—an invitation, however, that caused them to creep lower down and cling close to one another.

At that instant a repetition of the noise caused the elder and braver boy to once more uncover his head and listen, pretty certain that the cause of the sound was not in the room; there-upon a muffled voice was heard demanding why they did not respond to the knocking, and which was followed by a louder knock and a fresh demand, with an assertion that the speaker knew they were not asleep.

Sufficiently recovered by this time to identify the voice as coming from some boy on the other side of the door, the elder lad said in a low voice, though sufficiently audible to be heard on the outside, 'What do you want?'

'What do I want?—why don't you come and see?'

The voice now sounded in the room, which caused the boy to look round and exclaim, 'Where?'

'Here at the door,' was the response, whereby he became aware that it was some one speaking through the keyhole.

'I can't come,—I'm in bed.'

'You can't! Dash my old wig, wait till I get hold on ye, I'll see if you can't.'

'Well, what do you want?'

'Gi'e us a ha'penny.'

'A ha'penny,—what for?'

'Cos I want it.'

'I ain't got any ha'pence to give away.'

'Oh, ye ain't, ain't ye? Wait till to-morrow.'

And then there was a scuffle as of boys contending, concluding with a hard bump against the door, and voices exclaiming, 'Well, I got here first.'—'No, you didn't; ' then a renewed struggle terminating in a harsher voice speaking through the keyhole, 'Aw say, young uns, look-a-here, giv' us a ha'penny.' No response. 'Aw say, new boy, what's yer name? come you and giv' us a ha'penny, or it'll be waur fur ye.'

'Well, I can't now,' said the elder. 'Wait till to-morrow,—the door's locked.'

'Don't I know that?' said another voice, 'or you'd get something you didn't like afore now ; giv' us a ha'penny. If ye don't look out, I'll giv' ye such a drubbing to-morrow.'

Under the pleading advice of the two younger, the elder rose, and, searching his pockets for the amount demanded, thrust it under the door, and was about hastily retreating into bed, when he was arrested by another appeal : 'I say, give me a ha'penny too.'

'I gave you one.'

'No, you didn't ; that warn't me,—t'other chap got it.'

'Well, there's another ; now be off.'

This time, as he pushed the coin under the door, there was a great scuffle, accompanied by blows and cries of 'It's mine now,' which intimated that there was quite a large gathering on the other side of the door. Presently some one had evidently been successful in securing it, for the sound of receding feet intimated a chase in pursuit ; but now came voices through the keyhole, from under the door, through the space between the door and jamb, and elsewhere, in every cadence, but all reiterating the same words,—'Giv' me a ha'penny,—giv' me a ha'penny ;' to one or two of which, having further responded, he crept back to the bed, loudly asserting 'they were the greatest set of beggars ever he met.' But a run on the bank had set in, and was not going to be so readily stopped. The small compliance with the demand had rather aggravated than caused it to subside, and now expressions, from the endearing to the most pugnacious, cajoling and imperative, were uttered without stint, accompanied by such poundings on the door, that the three entertained small doubt the whole posse were about to burst bodily into the room, and prepared accordingly to seek shelter under the bed, when a sudden scampering of bare feet, followed by cries of 'Oh ! oh !' 'Please, sir !' 'Oh, sir !' 'It warn't me, sir !' as some heavy blows fell upon bare skins, testified to the fact that some unwelcome as well as unlooked-for personage had joined the interesting company without, and from the receding and continued cries was in full chase. Presently two or three loud smacks of a cane against the store-room door, followed by a harsh voice, not recognised by the three boys, demanded that they would go to sleep directly, or that the owner of the voice would come and assist them ; all of which, for the first night's entertainment, and under all the circumstances, was very consolatory and composing. However, it was very successful, as no further

disturbance took place, and soon the three boys fell into a sound sleep.

At six o'clock the next morning, the individual who had so summarily wound up the proceedings of the previous evening, and who proved to be the chief usher of the classical Academy, ascended the narrow staircase at the further end of the building, and passed through the several bed-rooms allotted to the boys, exclaiming as he went along, 'All up—all up!' Thereupon, boys awake, and boys fast asleep, by instinctive habit instantly rose to a sitting posture, and commenced rubbing eyes and pulling at garments; whilst one or two, more deeply engaged in finishing off their night's slumber, failing to respond, were recalled from their pleasant dream of home by the sudden hauling off of the bed-clothes, and, if not sufficiently expert, a salutation from the teacher's hand on their bare skins proved effectual in landing them on the other side of their beds.

There was one feature in this movement, which, as it occasionally occurred on what was termed lazy-fit mornings, may be mentioned in passing, and that is the general swaying backwards of the bodies that took place, and the redistribution of heads on the chaff-stuffed bolsters, immediately on the exit of the usher from one room to the other, although of such short duration that it might scarcely have been deemed worth the exertion, for the sound of the returning footsteps occasioned the said heads and bodies to resume the sitting posture, but this time the hands were simultaneously busy in clasping at various articles of apparel, as an expressive command was given to be down in five minutes, or Mr. 'All up' would be up again, who thereupon descended the stairs, but had scarcely reached the first step thereof, before the majority of the admonished boys had once more resumed their recumbent position.

As usually four or five times the allotted number of minutes expired without more than seven or eight making their appearance below, it resulted, of course, in a re-ascent for the purpose of instituting special inquiries as to the cause of the delay, but as the first placing of his foot on the bottom step was this time detected by the sharp ears nearest the stairs, it naturally followed that, before the head of the usher rose above the floor, a complete transformation had been effected in the room: every boy was on the further side of his bed pulling and tugging away at the first garment he could clutch, thrusting his legs into the arms of his jacket, or forcing those jeopardized limbs hind part

before into the garment expressly intended to encase them, the excitement immediately spreading into the adjoining rooms. 'What's all this mean?' shouts the authoritative man, as he brings up in the centre of the room, cane in hand, and takes a rapid survey of the beds, but, finding all vacant, rushes off to the next room, where he falls foul of one who had been rather later than his fellows in comprehending the situation, as demonstrated by the cries of 'Oh, oh!' that succeeded the sound of two or three cuts on the vulnerable parts, and which possessed one virtue, that of effectually rendering their repetition unnecessary in the remaining apartments, at least for the *same* purpose. For now, as he perambulates from room to room, having got his hand in, he evinces no desire to get it out, but lays about him right and left, according as it occurs to him that one or the other needs the stimulating application, but which need was partially occasioned by the nervous state into which the more timid were thrown by such manoeuvres; rather impeding than assisting, and generally terminating, as the threatening lictor approached the trembling subject, in a most expeditious flight; until the excitement spreading throughout the dormitories, a general stampede ensued, clutching in their haste such garments as yet remained undonned, concluding to complete the toilet on arrival at the school-room, to which place all were summoned to answer to the roll-call, as soon as the usher made his appearance there.

Strange-looking boys those Grumblebies, as they now congregated in the long narrow school-house,—not strange because they differed in countenance, in size, in configuration, or other physical development, as it would have been strange if they had not. Had a person of nervous temperament found himself unexpectedly in their midst, he must have experienced a painful sensation, not unmingled with distrust. Every boy, with few exceptions, had the same cadaverous, wolfish, skin-tight look, the same quick, restless eye, that, as it glared at you, appeared to be feasting on nothing and asking for more; and which appearance was not diminished by the style or set of their outward garniture, quite unique in make. Some had their legs thrust through trousers that would have been more correctly designated by the term breeches, having long ceased to hold the former relation to the wearers, whilst the upper parts of their bodies were enveloped in coats that must have originally been intended for individuals of much larger proportions, but had descended, according to *usage*, to their present holders. Others, again, were

habited in garments that were well adapted for strait-jackets, with sleeves terminating at the elbow; whilst, in relieving contrast, the lower garments of such had to be turned up at each leg to facilitate the movements of the feet. The article intended for the head, and dignified by the title of hat, was said to have been made of *ling*, whatever material that meant; it was as a rule brimless, and if not crownless, that arose from the circumstance that it still adhered to the top by a small portion acting as a hinge to the cover. Not that these deficiencies were of any moment, as the hat, somewhat like the cap of the Bluecoat boy, was an article of dress very generally regarded as a superfluity, and quite unnecessary for the protection of their heads, their ragged, unkempt hair, permitted to accumulate without being subject to excision more than once a year, proving of itself an effectual barrier against wind and weather. Collars or neckties were unknown. But the shoeing,—well, that was, *per se*, so varied in pattern, shape, and size, that any attempted description would be vain. No pair, or rather set,—for there were no pairs,—were alike; those on one pair of feet being as striking for their dissimilarity in pattern as their contrast in size. And yet in one particular they *were* alike. The first fortnight's wear was sufficient to produce a series of excoriations on the ankles, insteps, and big toes of all, that forthwith necessitated the universal plaster, prepared by that artisan on the staff whose especial function it was to keep in repair the occasion of such trouble, composed of cobbler's wax spread on a thin piece of shaved leather, and stuck on the sore, that very probably, prior to the application, had eaten to the bone. For the first month or two the newer boys might be seen limping about the grounds with boots or shoes fastened around their waists or necks, but, indurated by degrees, the callus prevented any further obstruction to their wear.

The school-room, as before incidentally observed, was a long and narrow stone building. The windows on each side looked on to a cabbage garden, the source of continual temptation, trouble, and punishment to the boys. A flue ran down one side the interior of the building under the flagged floor, conveying the heat from the furnace before alluded to to the room. Along and over this flue, the boys, on winter evenings, were wont to lie full length to warm their bodies. The old rickety desks around the room, into which the inkstands were sunk, besides their specific use, afforded an opportunity for every student who had passed through this select Academy, and thereby been profited

by its superior advantages, to chronicle that fact by employing them as tablets on which to engrave or carve his name, or, if less ambitious, his initials; that is, if any vacant space for such purpose could be found, and as there was not on the top, the later arrivals were compelled to descend to the legs and forms. There were, besides, some graphic representations of animals, both quadruped and biped, some of the latter being intended as likenesses of the presiding genius of the establishment.

Screaming, shouting, striking, and racing over desks and upsetting forms, the Babel confusion was at its height, when the awe-inspiring form of the afore-mentioned usher, Mr. Hector Grippem, appeared at the open door, attended by his junior assistant, Mr. Sawney Shadd, the person who had conducted the three new boys to their beds on the previous night. A profound silence ensued.

‘Mr. Shadd,’ said the chief dignitary as he entered, ‘close the door.’

As Mr. Shadd, according to wont, had already done so, he answered, ‘The door *is* closed.’

Without further noticing him, Mr. Grippem looked scowlingly around the room, and then strode over to his desk at the further end. Every boy instinctively and as noiselessly as possible slid into his own seat at the long desks, whispering the usual confidential information that there was *something up*,—a very trite remark, as it would have been more remarkable if *something* had not been *up*. But on this occasion Mr. Grippem was additionally ruffled at the boys not having been *up* to time, thereby rendering a second visit to their bed-rooms needful.

Mr. Grippem, whose appearance inspired such awe, was a thin, ribby, rather tall than short man, very dark-complexioned, and prominent, forbidding features, curly, matted black hair, which, it may be, gave rise to the current rumour that there was African blood in his veins. Irritable and taciturn, he rarely spoke but when necessitated by his duties. When enraged, into which state any opposition would convert his hot temper, he was ungovernable, and even brutal. Woe to the boy who fell under his displeasure at such times; pity or compassion formed no portion of the ingredients in his temper. Every expedient to escape detection in any fault, real or imaginary, was resorted to by the delinquent boy; but if detection ensued, the more experienced submitted with a readiness and equanimity that told how hopeless they knew any appeal or attempt at vindication

would be,—a course that operated slightly in their favour when compared with the castigation which a contrary mode always brought upon an appellant. But it was only occasionally such outbursts of temper, that so completely mastered him, were provoked.

Mr. Shadd had, at some period unknown to the scholars, entered the institution as a student, and it was supposed, not having been claimed in after years by his friends, had been taken on the permanent staff as junior teacher. His deformed appearance rendering him, unhappily, a subject of contempt to the boys, in conjunction with his servile disposition, caused his authority to be little respected. He was perceptibly in awe of his senior, to whom he played the part of a satellite, or, as laconically designated by the boys, coupling this characteristic with his name, 'Shadow;' or, still more in harmony with such patronymic, 'Shaddy.' As he had been trained in the Grumbleby institution, he was of course eminently qualified for his position, and perfectly apt at teaching *what* he had learned under its admirable system. Except when under the eye of his dominant senior, he was harmless, wearing the same pensive regard as the generality of the scholars.

To these two worthies the chief control and management of the boys was left, with the occasional advantage of the assistance of the eldest son of Mr. Kearas (named Minas), Mr. Kearas himself never condescending to grace the school-room with his presence on other than red or black letter days,—an example that his son, though not so exclusively, emulated, quite in accord with his sage parent, that a more undisturbed idea of the pre-eminence of the classical status of the establishment was gained from a remoter point of view.

CHAPTER XX.

INDICATIVE MOOD TANGIBLY TAUGHT.

WHAT'S a crossing old Grip this morning, I wonner?' said a boy nicknamed Bubbs.

'I don' know, and what's more, don't care,' replied the boy addressed, who was one of the senior boys of the institution, and recognised as the cock-of-the-walk, from which standpoint he assumed a degree of independence.

'Don't he look drefful cross?' whispered a little boy, his eyes at the same time fixed on his book as though repeating his lesson, to another small boy by his side; whereat the boy addressed ventured to steal a glance at the usher, in time to catch a scowling look from the stern man, as he sat, spider like, crouching behind his desk awaiting his victim, and that caused the boy to turn his head back with a shudder.

'Silence!' and bang, bang, came the cane down on the desk, with a force that made a score of trembling urchins nearly start out of their shoes (somewhat difficult to retain on their feet even in less perilous times), whilst a few others almost stopped their breathing. After a temporary pause, a low murmur throughout the school implied that all were absorbed in their lessons, which they were repeating to themselves, or getting their neighbour to hear them recite at a rapid rate; an under-current of thought, however, causing the majority to revolve in their minds the possibilities of themselves, or their *vis-à-vis*, being the fortunate ones selected for the morning's discipline.

'Did I say silence?' said Mr. Grippem, in a half-inquiring tone. Considering the question was not addressed to any one in particular, of course no one felt called on to reply; on the contrary, not a sound was heard, as even the lesson repetition ceased, although a recognised feature in their studies. Another breathless pause, and then some one ventured to resume his

respiration,—an operation that had been very generally suspended for some seconds, whereat another presumed to follow suite, and then another, until finally all had recourse to the same expedient to get rid of the surplus carbon stagnant within, and replace it, for want of something more substantial, by a mouthful of oxygen; but as this abandonment was followed by an involuntary movement throughout the school, the Titan was aroused. ‘Again!’ exclaimed the sensitive man, this time casting his terrible engine of discipline over the nearer forms to a distant desk. In its flight it caused many heads to bob down, until, descending, it narrowly escaped Bubbs, who, however, ducking in time, it struck the ear of the luckless boy to his left. ‘Oh!’ shouted the lad, as he rubbed his ear and knocked his head against his neighbour, thereby calling forth a corresponding ‘Oh!’

‘Bring up that stick.’ Not a word nor a movement,—even the two stricken ones ceased their manipulations.

‘Are—you—going—to—bring—up—that—stick?’ said the usher, deliberately stopping at each word until he came to the last, which he uttered with a shout that caused a general start, followed by an uneasy movement, and then a furtive glance at those in the vicinity of the cane, who, it was concluded, must be the parties whose attendance was so desirable.

‘How long am I to wait before those boys bring that cane up?’ said the usher, as he pounded the desk with his fist, and then looked very hard at it, as though he expected a response from the lid. Here was something more definite,—‘Boys!’ then there must be two, and who could the two be, if not those already designated by the cane in its accidental gravitation. Thereupon very expressive signs from faces and fingers indicated the general opinion that they were the parties wanted, but which was indignantly repudiated by said parties, who in return as energetically intimated by corresponding countersigns that Bubbs and the one next him on the right were intended.

‘Am—I—to—go to them?’ said the man, waxing warmer, and still addressing his desk, concluding with another blow thereon.

Go to them?—No, the whole desk of boys was personally interested in such alternative. In such case nothing less than a general caning would be the result. ‘Go on, Vernon.’ ‘Why don’t you go up, Dean?’ ‘Go yourself, Tidy.’ ‘Why don’t you go, Bangs?’ was now being very generally uttered along the delinquent desk, the names being repeated as caught up by those

at a greater distance. 'Go you, Bubbs.' 'Go yoursel' if you're so fond on it,' said the latter.

'Oh, then I *am* to go,—eh?' said the usher, making a movement.

'Go up, Vernon and Bubbs,' urged five or six in audible voices. 'See, if you get us thrashed,' said one of the bigger boys, 'if I don't pay you out.'

'Well, it warn't us, then,' said Vernon, beginning to cry. 'It was Dean and Bangs.'

As this was uttered in a loud whining key, the quick ear of the teacher caught the names.

'Dean and Bangs,—eh? Do Dean and Bangs intend to honour me with their company this morning?'

'I'll pay you for that, you Vernon!—you see if I don't! Come on, Dean,' said Bangs, who knew further delay was dangerous.

'Dean and Bangs, bring up that cane.'

As Bangs lifted his legs over the form, he picked up the cane, turned towards Vernon, and shook it at him, and, doubling his fist, applied it to his own nasal, a sign perfectly comprehended, without further explanation, by the said Vernon, who was nevertheless quite satisfied at the present aspect of affairs. And now began a slow march,—Dean, with laudable modesty, declining to lead the van. An irresistible movement took place, as all eyes turned to look at the culprits, the latter of whom was suddenly brought to the front by a dexterous movement of Bangs, who at the same time made sundry grimaces at the several desks as he passed on, eliciting a very general smile of approbation at his dexterity and coolness.

'Mr. Shadd, are you going to see that those boys attend to their lessons, or leave it all to me?'

Mr. Shadd rose, and busied himself with nothing.

'Oh, it's you, Master Dean,' said the usher, as the two now stood before the tribunal,—'you, that until now have stood so high in my opinion?'

As Master Dean had been the recipient of about as many canings as, on the average, fell to the lot of the rest, he of course was affected at this announcement, implying the descent he had made in the usher's valuable estimation.

'Please, sir,—

'Silence, sir!—and he snatched the cane from Bangs' hand, thereby causing Dean to jump aside. 'Did not all the boys round you see you and hear you?'

'No, sir; it's a whacker.'

'Oh, of course. I see now you are as bad as this rascal.' He looked daggers at Bangs, who thereupon felt additional cause to felicitate himself that he was not the first to 'catch it.' 'It was an error of my heart that made me set you down to be any better than the rest; you are all alike.'

'No, sir; please, sir,'—

'Hold out your hand.'

'Oh, please, this once, sir.'

'Hold out your hand!' exclaimed the angry man, with a look and tone that compelled the shrinking lad to project his half-open hand about an inch from his side.

'Won't you hold out your hand?' said the teacher, as he brought down the cane on the boy's shoulders, that made him dance and cry out, 'I'll never do it again, sir.'

'O no, I'll take care of that. Hold out your hand;'—and, making a dart at the boy, he grasped his wrist, and struck his clasped hand with the cane, until, opening it, he bestowed several blows thereon, and wound up by following him a few steps as he retreated to his seat, lacing his jacket, as it was termed.

Returned to his desk, he glared savagely at the other boy, and, recovering his breath, exclaimed, 'And you, Master Bangs,—you were doing nothing either?—you never are! It's time you began, sir,—it's time you began. What have you to say?'

The boy made no reply,—too wise for that,—but looked down at his foot, with which he was describing certain marks on the dusty floor, then glanced slyly at the boys on the nearest form, who ventured to look round to see if he was game, but immediately waived any further curiosity in that respect, moved thereto by a few smart applications from the cane, accompanied with the intimation that if they did not attend to their lessons they would receive a further allowance.

'Look at me, Bangs.' The boy raised his head, and gazed at the teacher listlessly. 'I ask, what were you doing? Answer me.' The boy still gazed vacantly into his face. 'Oh, you won't speak,—eh? I'll see if I can't get something out of you. You can speak when you are not wanted to.'

Upon this the cane descended with a heavy blow upon his shoulders; but the boy stood unmoved.

'Hold out your hand.' The hand was instantly stretched out, and the heavy descent of the cane fairly struck it down. 'What! will you dare draw your hand away? Hold out again.' Again

it was raised, and again the force of the blow knocked it down. 'Now, the other;' and the same process was repeated with the other hand. Not a word or a cry escaped. 'Oh, you don't feel it,—eh? Then hold out again.—Again.' And thus the furious man proceeded, until he wound up with several cuts across his arms and legs, every one of which raised a welt on the unflinching lad.

As Bangs retired to his seat, to which Dean had preceded him, beyond placing his swollen, burning hands under his armpits, and subjecting them to a prolonged squeezing, he gave no other indication of feeling; on the contrary, as he passed up the school, he smiled and nodded to his admiring fellow-scholars, who all now whispered to each other 'that they knowed he was game;' whilst the other lad, a more recent arrival, not yet indurated by the hardening process, was giving expression to his appreciation of the treatment in cries and sobs, much to the enjoyment of those nearest him, who did not fail to manifest their further sympathy by putting various interrogations, such as, 'How he liked patticakes?' and 'Which hand was hottest?' until a book, passionately thrown at the head of the opposite joker, put an end thereto by drawing upon them the attention of the usher, whose warning voice silenced further proceedings.

Strange perverse natures,—not a sign of sorrow or penitence, but rather bravado and defiance. How terribly depraved! No wonder if they make bad men, impervious to kindlier influence, dead to all the fine, pure, holy instincts of the diviner nature. Mark, too, how early these boys develop their ingrained corruption, and how it runs through the whole. What else but the whip and the rein, coercion and rigid discipline, could restrain and hold such natures within bounds?

But in thus judging are we not at issue, not with them, but with their Creator, whose omnipotence could compel, if aught could; but it neither does nor seeks so to do. The way to the heart through the bruised body?—Never.

Taunt that boy or man with his stubbornness, his wilfulness, his wickedness, and then, as you inform him you intend to go on in the effort to drive it out, and every attribute will defiantly respond, 'I *am* stubborn, I *am* wilful, I *am* wicked, and I mean to be; so look out.' And with Spartan endurance he accepts the inevitable, and, repelling the mode with greater obstinacy, he plots the deeper in his essay to out-herod Herod, until he adds one

more to the criminal band to be only restrained by prison bars and prison discipline.

'Go to, now,' approach that boy, or man, whose sneer and ribald language, as he hears his sentence pronounced by magistrate or judge, proclaim his unmitigated hardihood, and in kind, sympathetic, not pitying spirit, take that hand in yours; look into that eye, but a minute ago so expressive of hatred, with one tender, loving look. Speak with that tone you spoke, ere-while, to your own idol, and now mark: the eyelid falls, the iron will is melting, a tremulous motion of the hand, and an effort to swallow something, and then to smother the involuntary rising emotion and to pass on. Ay, hidden though it was, and all covered over, it was there; and that's how it came to well up. New only in expression, it was ever there; it only wanted, what it unconsciously yearned for, that little bucket, ever so small, let down into the lower depth to draw it up. How many a one braves the world's harshness and contumely, and fights it because it fights him.

'Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.'

'Call the list,' said Mr. Grippem, whereupon an *old* boy stepped out with slate in hand, on which he put down absentees, whilst Mr. Shadd drawled out the names in alphabetic order,—'Aslem,' 'Brady,' 'Bower,' 'Cognod,' 'Calypot;' and thus through the whole category, the owner of each name, or somebody for him, responding 'Here,' generally at the top of the voice, through all its inflections. As this wound up the morning's proceedings, the senior usher locked his desk, and, followed by his junior, quitted the school-room, the signal to the boys that the morning's session had terminated, who thereupon rushed out of the building to engage in play or preconcerted undertakings, amongst which may be enumerated the paying off of such scores as had accumulated since the last evening, and of course those incurred during the morning's exercises, the more prominent being the redemption of those promissory obligations made by Bangs to the young gentleman at whose suggestion he had undergone the flagellation, but who just then, it may be needless to observe, was nowhere to be found.

The chief interest now appeared to centre around the door of

the lean-to forming the wash and bake house, around which a few smaller boys, and one or two of the larger, gradually congregated, and whence, venturing within, one or two bolder than the rest approached the further door that opened into the eating room. These were soon joined by others, until a crowd of hungry stomachs were most interestedly watching the operations of the Messieurs Grippem and Shadd.

At the further end of the room, Mr. Grippem was seated astride a high four-legged stool, on the top of a huge brown loaf, so brown that it might with more propriety be termed black. His hands grasped the two iron extremities of a large, broad blade, resembling a chaff-cutter, with which he cut through the whole depth of the loaf, and slice after slice successively dropped into a large hazel wicker basket at the foot of the stool. At the close of this operation he proceeded to the long bare tables arranged on each side of the room, and, breaking the large slices into several pieces, apportioned the contents of the basket into small lots along the two sides of the tables, occasionally making up one lot with fragmentary pieces and crumbs. After this he filled the tin mugs placed on the end table from the contents of a large tub of 'sky-blue,' which tins Mr. Shadd or a monitor placed by the side of each of the bread deposits. All being pronounced ready, the monitor came to the door and announced breakfast; whereupon the scramble to get in first, as usual, resulted in two or three sprawling on the floor. Then, as the monitor proceeded to the outside and shouted breakfast at the top of his voice, the magic word was caught up and echoed and re-echoed throughout the playground. Down went stick, stone, bat, ball, and whatever else at the moment they were occupied with, and from every quarter a most animating race ensued; shoes kicked off were carried in hand, lest the speed to the fascinating goal should be impeded. As each rushed to his seat, his eye took in the relative proportions of his own and his neighbour's allotment, and, acting on the decision of the moment, failing the arrival of the legitimate owner in time, an exchange for the bigger or fancied better pile was manipulated with the dexterity of a conjuror.

At the conclusion of the meal, which, unsavoury as it was, rapidly disappeared, one after the other slipped out of the room, heedless of his stimulated digestion, which craved in vain for more. The practice of some more modern establishments was unknown at this seat of learning, cramming, as an art, never

being practised on the Grumbleby boys, either intellectually or stomachically, experienced to a still greater degree on hasty pudding mornings, when that 'cheat-stomach stuff' sent the still hungry boys to the pig barrel, to fish out the lumps of dough and meat that found their way thereto from the 'rich man's table,' a robbery, however, invariably protested against by Mrs. Kearas.

A detail of the other two meals, whilst it might enlighten, would not be very entertaining, and therefore is dispensed with, being of opinion that if the boys had not 'enough' at either of those apologies for dinner and supper, the reader has had quite sufficient insight into the victualling department of this unique establishment without *his* requiring more.

This being their first morning, according to usage, the three new boys were not called until some time after the rest. As they emerged from their sleeping apartment, the stillness that reigned throughout the emptied rooms excited their curiosity to look in at the nearest doorway. The desolate appearance and confused heaps of bed-clothes lying about the floor bewildered them, and they shrank back to the head of the stairs, and stood looking over the banister. No sound save the ticking of the hall clock disturbed the silence, and for a few moments they hesitated as to their next course.

'Go on, can't you,' at length said the elder boy in an undertone, at the same time pushing his brother, who thereupon clung to the rails. 'What are you afraid of?'

As neither of the two made any movement to descend, Willie led the way, and the three crept softly down to the newel post, terminating in the front hall, around which a consultation took place as to their further course, when, Willie again taking the lead, they came to the dark passage before described as running at right-angles to the Hall.

'Go on,' whispered the elder, himself the last in the procession, thereby ensuring that none lagged behind except himself. 'Go on, Tommy,' addressing his junior, who was number two in the rank.

'How can I go on when Willie's afore me?'

'Oh, get out; you go on, Willie.'

'Which way?' said the latter; and, gathering in a knot, they looked up and down the passage, into which the only glimmer of light that entered was from a door at the left end that was not closely shut, from which sounds proceeded. Advancing on tip'

toe, Willie mustered courage to peep through the opening, and, hastening back, informed the other two that there was a queer-looking old woman with a big nightcap on her head, stirring something in a pot on the fire, at which information they placed their hands over their mouths to suppress an involuntary giggle. As their vision became more habituated to the dark passage, they discovered the door in front of them that led down to the cellar; the elder boy stepped softly forward, and was about to raise the latch, when a movement of the younger arrested him, and, looking in the direction to which he was pointing, they became aware that a head was projecting beyond the jamb of the door, which was slightly open, at the end of the passage on the right. On perceiving that it had attracted attention, it immediately withdrew. The boys drew closer together, but, without saying a word, kept their eyes strained in the direction of the door. Slowly and cautiously the strange head projected again, but this time exhibited more of the features, over which such an expansive smile was spread, that it recalled to the two brothers the Grimaldian expression that had impressed itself on their memory since the last Christmas pantomime, and thereupon nearly caused an explosion, but that a sound of scolding, issuing from the other end, timely interposed, and at the same time caused the head to quickly vanish, but as the sounds ceased it reappeared.

‘What is it?’ said Willie.

‘It’s somebody’s head,’ said Tommy, with a shake of his own at his presumed sagacity.

‘Speak to it,’ said the elder.

‘You!’ said the other.

‘You speak, Willie.’

During these few words they perceived a hand extended on a line with the head, the fingers of which were in rapid motion, as though beckoning them to advance. The boys looked at each other, and then again at the face and hand, still grinning and beckoning.

‘Oh, come on,’ said the bigger boy, gaining courage; ‘don’t you see it’s calling us? What are ye waiting for?’

Whereat, squeezing abreast, they proceeded slowly along the narrow passage. The head and hand disappeared, and they came to an immediate halt. But as they were now so near the door, after a brief pause they concluded to move on, and, pushing it wide open, peered into the back entrance already spoken

of, in which, however, as their eyes, now familiarized with the darkness, looked around, they could discern nothing but slop-pails and brooms, and other articles indicative of the morning's occupation of the servants.

After a further careful inspection, during which neither the head nor its owner could be discovered, Tommy ventured to suggest 'whether it was not the mop that stood behind the door that they had seen ;' but as this was instantly and ironically pronounced by the other two to be a very sensible remark, Tommy returned to his previous assertion, and affirmed that 'he knew it was a head,' although it *was* very like a mop ; in which view he was not far astray. But as he was further asked to explain how a mop could have a face and a hand, he did not venture to insist on this latter idea, but set to work to consider the proposition. Without, however, awaiting his reply, they simultaneously moved towards a door, through a cracked panel of which a feeble streak of light entered, that opened into the yard, but had not got more than half-way across the entry before they were arrested by the creaking of a door at the other end, which appeared to be gradually opening of its own accord on the inside. As they stood staring thereat, the same head reappeared, accompanied this time, however, by a neck and shoulders, the same broad grin on the face, and once more beckoning them to advance. The boys hesitated for a moment, and then proceeded slowly, and somewhat abashed. As they approached, the door gradually opened, and, stepping up into the room, they found themselves in a good-sized apartment, with unmistakeable evidences of its being used as an eating-room. A large square table in the centre was spread with a coarse brown cloth, on which cups and saucers and other paraphernalia were laid for eight or nine persons, together with a plate or two of buttered bread. Directly opposite them, over the mantelpiece, in a large brown frame, hung a life-sized portrait of a man of about thirty, with brown hair brushed straight up in front and flat at the sides, very red lips and cheeks, large blue eyes, heavy brows, and straight spreading nose ; the shirt-collar up to the ears, the neck enveloped in a thick white neckcloth ; and habited in a buff waistcoat, with broad rolling collar, and a blue brass-buttoned coat. From this likeness it was with an effort that they withdrew their gaze, as, although dirt and smoke and flies had considerably disguised the artist's lines, it did seem as though the figure, with a bland smile extending from ear to ear, was regard-

ing them with a most benignant look, that followed them move which way they would. On each side of the chimney-piece, supported by nails, was a pipe, one of which, by its blackened appearance, was well used, the other being a new one in reserve in case of need. Spittoons and pipe-lights were on the floor and mantel; the chairs and other furniture were of old style, having probably been handed over with the building. An arm-chair of large proportions, well stuffed, and covered with faded red cloth, stood at the side of the fireplace; a few articles, such as tea-caddy, bellows, knife-box, and trays, stood on the side tables, or hung about the room, which was carpeted in the centre only.

Whilst the boys were making this inspection, the figure gradually moved from behind the door, and shuffled towards the recessed window, where it seemed to become very earnestly engaged in contemplating some object on the outside, but was speedily interrupted therein by the entrance of a bluebottle fly from the murky passage through the open door, as it darted at the window with a force that caused it to fall, occasioning the figure to start back, and then make an attempt with its foot to crush it; but, instantly recovering itself, the insect rose and commenced a circling flight around the room, announcing by its buzzing its continued approach to the head of the figure at the window, until at length it evidenced a design to settle thereon, by wheeling around it in slower motion, but in which it was frustrated by the rapid shakes of the said head, that occasioned another wheel around the room, and another attempted descent, equally unsuccessful; whereupon it made a demonstration upon the three smaller heads, but which was as determinately resisted by similar energetic shakes, that soon occasioned a relaxation of the stiffness and a pleasant interchange of looks, which eventually broke out into little bursts of laughter, especially when, becoming bolder in its attacks, each young gentleman struck out at the pertinacious insect, in which feat they were imitated by the figure, that by this time they had decided was a girl. At length, in token of defeat, their tormentor darted out of the room by the way it entered.

Encouraged by the slight introduction the bluebottle had been the means of effecting, they gradually approached the girl, who still retained her position at the window, and after one or two cautious side-looks up at her face, which were each time acknowledged by a broad grin, the boys engaged in an undertone

conversation relative to the several articles outside the window, until attracted by a grindstone, mounted on a large water-trough. After some discussion as to its purpose, they defined it to be a mill.

'Tain't a mill,' said the odd-looking girl; and then she laughed, and then the boys laughed, and looked at each other, and, stealing another glance at the girl, went off into a fresh burst, in which the latter also joined, and then the four went at it simultaneously, until the female suddenly stopped, and, assuming a grave countenance, pointed to the door, and intimated that somebody was coming, a proceeding that effectually put an end to any further cacchinations. But as no one made an appearance, they resumed their survey of the room, and then of the object by their side, who also scrutinized each face with equal interest.

She was a good-natured fat lump, with a low forehead, and dreamy, if not silly, expressionless face; a coarse thick mop head of hair, cut short on a line with her brows and lower portion of her ears and neck, added considerably to this dazed appearance. She wore a faded lilac cotton gown, the waist just below her armpits, her clumsy figure never having been subjected to 'the vigorous corrective source of tight-lacing' on the modern 'corset system';—we quote from an authority on such matters, by whom it is advanced as being pursued, with some effect, at certain ladies' boarding-schools of the present day. Though a slight interruption to this portion of our narrative, one cannot refrain from expressing surprise that the same idea never occurred to the conductors of those northern academies, to whose system it would have been an invaluable adjunct, if only on economic grounds, since a young lady, a *pensionnaire* at one of the said boarding-schools, states—we quote again—that 'though the parts within must be either squeezed together or slightly displaced,' yet 'the human frame is so elastic, that, if room be left for this displacement, no inconvenience results, as the chest absorbs the loss at the waist.' Good; a very sensible young lady that. But in its application to the male department at Grumbleby it would of course require a slight modification, namely, the adaptation of the corset to the region below the waist, where the displacement would be of more practical utility to the subject than elsewhere, as the room there was already more than ample, and any absorption at the chest, of all that escaped to it by way of loss, would be rather beneficial than otherwise,—more so even than in the case of the young ladies.

The survey of the boys by the young woman being completed, resulted in her predilection for the handsome, ingenuous Willie, and forthwith her fingers were playing through his soft silken hair. Encouraged by his smile, she stooped down, looked into his face, and smiled; and as, instead of drawing back, he artlessly returned her gaze with an expression that intimated an instinctive recognition of her kindly though awkwardly-communicated feelings towards himself, in another moment she was on her knees, hugging him with the fervour of one in whom the passions were strong,—the more strongly displayed just then from the rare occasion of their being, if ever before at this place of her sojourn, called forth.

Released from her embrace, Willie observed that his companions had withdrawn a few paces, and were looking on with some trepidation, evidently in fear lest their turn was coming; but reassured as they saw her cast a hurried look towards the door, and then step over to the table and take a slice of bread and butter off one of the plates, and, thrusting her hand into the bowl, spread some sugar over it with her fingers. Putting it into Willie's hand, she guided it to his mouth, and, on his taking a bite, stepped back and grinned hugely; then shook her heavy head several times, patted her chest, and exclaimed, 'Nice, eh?' to which he testified by a nod and a larger bite. Observing his two friends regarding him very wistfully, he stepped over to them, and bid them each bite a piece, but which the girl prevented by bidding them come forward whilst she prepared a slice between the two, which she had just reached out her hand to do, when the sound of feet was heard in the adjoining entry. Instantly she snatched the piece out of Willie's hand, then in the act of conveying it to his mouth for another attack thereon, and had barely time to roll her hand in her apron as Mrs. Kearas entered, followed by her husband; the former a short, stout, elderly woman, with a round, red puffy face and twinkling grey eyes, her grey hair tucked under a high-crowned cap, tied round with a broad black band. She wore a heavy plaited blue calico gown, open at the bosom, the space, however, being covered by an inside thick muslin handkerchief that passed over her broad shoulders underneath the body of the gown; a heavy bunch of keys was suspended from the band around her short-waisted dress.

The girl's movement had not been quick enough to escape the keen eye of Mrs. Kearas, who was additionally on the alert as

she caught the astonished look of Willie, and also observed the alarm depicted on the countenances of the other two by this sudden action of the girl.

'Tut, tut!' exclaimed the old lady in a squeaky voice, that by no means lessened the boys' dismay; 'what's all this? what's afoot now, you hussy?' Stepping over to the girl, whose face by this time had assumed a crimson hue, she seized her by the arm, and forcibly withdrew her hand from her apron, thereby causing the remnant of sugared bread to fall on the ground. 'Ay, ay,' said she, as she stooped down and picked it up, and then, examining it, turned round to her husband, whom these proceedings had arrested just within the door. 'Do you see that, Mr. Kearas?—do you see that, sir?'

'What is it, my dear?'

'What is it! Why, look; it's plain enough. Don't you see it's a large slice of bread and butter an inch thick with sugar? That's how I'm robbed. Them's the kind of hussies you place under my charge, as though I could ever make anything out of 'em, so as to be a credit to the place. Now you see if she's the fool you cried her up to be, as could do no harm. Look at that, sir. Now where's your harmless fool? Are you convicted now?' Mr. Kearas shook his head in astonishment. 'Ain't you?' Mr. Kearas sighed a sigh of disappointment, and shook his head again. 'You ain't! Then I'd like to know what 'ud convict you.'

Mrs. Kearas threw the piece of bread indignantly on the table.

'My dear, I didn't mean—that is, I didn't go to say'—

'Then why did ye shake your head?'

'Because I couldn't help it,—I was all taken aback so.'

'Then why didn't you say so?'

Thereupon she turned towards the girl, who by this time had reassumed her usual stolid manner, and, after a round of abuse, in which the words 'thief,' 'moppet,' and other such elegant phrases were employed to express her estimate of the character of her lady-pupil, she ordered her to her room, to remain there until she heard further from herself.

'That's an example for these innocent children. I'd rather have a dozen such—bless their young hearts!—than six like that big hulk of a girl,'—an assertion which, though not probably quite expressive of her meaning, was doubtless quite true in another sense, since twelve would pay very much better than half that number.

Whilst this scene was enacting, the three boys were the subjects of different emotions. The two whose mouths had been set watering at the anticipated treat now felt quite good that they had not partaken of the 'sweet morsel,' although Tommy felt some latent regret that he had not taken a larger bite of Willie's piece, who in his turn experienced some qualms of conscience as being really the most interested party in the transaction, and consequently, in his own estimation, the most guilty. Moved by such consideration, more than once during the attack on the doltish-looking girl he was about to avow his complicity, but the volubility of the schoolmistress, and her summary proceedings, prevented the explanation he wished to make, although, had it been made, it would have had no beneficial result, the girl's turpitude having been long since decided on by Mrs. Kearas, who had come to regard her with settled dislike.

At this juncture another young lady made her appearance, with a very sharp oval face and pinched-up features, dressed in much the same costume as the other, but all radiant with smirks and smiles, which were most benignantly permitted to beam incessantly on Mrs. Kearas, whose wants and whims she seemed intuitively to anticipate. She had scarcely entered before the schoolmistress commenced giving her an exaggerated account of the last delinquency in which Milly, her schoolmate, and the only other female pupil in the establishment, had been detected, 'thereby affording a further illustration of her oft-repeated assertion that she was a disgrace to her sex, Mr. Kearas to the contrary notwithstanding,' whose effort thereupon at explanation she affected not to hear, but continued in the same strain to remark 'that she did not know what she should do if Ann (the name of the young lady to whom she was addressing herself) were not what she were,—a girl that she could trust with untold gold, and every key in the house besides, and no fear of helping herself either' (it would have been ill-timed just then to have recalled one or two peccadilloes of Miss Ann's that had not passed unnoticed or unrebuked on the confidential occasions referred to), 'and who is a comfort and a treasure,' added she, addressing no one in particular, 'for she ain't blind, as some people are, as can see nothing wrong.'

She raised her eyes, and looked very pointedly at Mr. Kearas, who at the moment was lifting off the plate that was covering a rasher of bacon on the table, the fumes from which had additionally whetted his appetite. 'Now let that alone till we sit

down, can't you? and not be prying into everything in that way.—No, there's not a thing goes on in the house unbeknowing to her, and that she don't tell me of,'—a qualification more appreciated by Mrs. Kearas than the other members of the establishment.

Miss Ann, whose humility was not at all affected by this flattering allusion to herself, 'was by no means surprised at this fresh exhibition of her schoolfellow's depraved instincts, it being only another corroboration of what she had been telling Mrs. Kearas again and again' (and thereby done her best to preclude any chance of rivalry in the esteem of the strongly-prejudiced mistress), 'but who at times, she was afraid, was unwilling to give credence thereto.'

This latter remark was uttered in an undertone, as though brooding over a slight injustice done to herself, but which instantly called forth an earnest protestation from that considerate lady, 'that she in no wise doubted the correctness of her espionage, and that, if she gave any token thereof at any time, it was quite unintentional, and arose from her *incredible* nature, which she knew laid her open to continual imposition by the whole household; but that rendered her Argus-eyed mentor still more valuable and necessary.'

The two professors, Messrs. Grippem and Shadd, entering at this moment, much to the relief of Mr. Kearas, who had been unable to resist several side-glances at the 'rasher,' the whole party, including the three boys, seated themselves at the tables.

The amiable Miss Ann relieved Mrs. Kearas of the extra duty occasioned by the addition to their numbers, by personally attending to the boys.

After informing them that she knew they preferred their tea weak, as she looked towards Mrs. Kearas, to which that lady assented in emphatic language, dwelling on the hurtful tendency of even weak tea on children's nerves, she proceeded to fill their mugs with two-thirds hot water, and afterwards presented each with a small thin slice of bread and butter, but from which, however, for like pathological considerations, she first scraped off any surplus amount of the latter commodity that had been accidentally left thereon, and bid them make a hearty breakfast.

'Please, marm, my tea ain't sweet,' said the elder boy.

'Dear me, didn't you sweeten his tea, Ann?'

'There's loads in, ma'am.'

'Let me taste,' said the schoolmistress; upon which sh

reached for the mug and sipped thereat, then returned it, and, as she made sundry attempts to recover from the effects of the taste, exclaimed, 'Bless me, child! why, it's as sweet as sugar itself. Little boys must be satisfied with what they get';—a decision which caused the boys to endeavour to dispose of their bitter doses without further appeal. But as they more speedily disposed of their small slices of bread and scrapings, they wondered whether the decision was equally applicable to quantity as to quality, and so first looked at each other, and then at Miss Ann; but as that young lady was specially engaged in attending to Mr. Shadd, they looked next at the plate, and from that to the schoolmaster, who was at the moment inhaling a quantity of oxygen sufficient to enable him to take down a saucerful of hot tea with some degree of comfort, his eyes staring wildly at the boys during the operation.

'Hungry, lads?' said the schoolmaster, rightly interpreting their looks, as he laid down his emptied saucer on the table, and handed the largest piece of bread to the elder, who held out his hand for the same; but before he could get possession thereof, Mrs. Kearas interposed, and expressed her surprise how Mr. Kearas could think of stuffing the boy with a hunch like that, and proceeded to break it in two, when the lad exclaimed,—

'Please, marm, I'll be able to eat it all.'

'Then you oughter. I don't know where them boys put all they eat;' addressing herself to Mr. Grippem, who by an acquiescent movement of the head intimated his own perplexity at the wonderful feat.

'I wonner who cut such thick slices,—that Milly, I 'spose. Why didn't she put the loaf in the plate at once?'

'Here, child,' said she, proffering half to the boy, at the same time handing the other half to the younger. 'Can you eat all that?'

'Yes, marm.'

'Well, mind you don't leave any,—there's no waste allowed here.'

As she observed Willie regarding her very wistfully, she bid Ann 'give him the piece of sugared bread that that gal was eating when she came in.'

'No, ma'am,' said Willie, intending to explain.

'What's a matter?' interrupted the schoolmistress. 'She didn't hurt it, boy. If you don't want it, leave it; there's no more for you till that's ate, so you can do as you like.'

Whereupon, awed into silence, Willie was about to take possession of the unlucky morsel, when Tommy with some eagerness exclaimed,—

‘I’ll eat it, ma’am, if he don’t want it!’

‘Eat what’s given you. Sakes, they’ll eat us out of house and home afore they’ve been here a week!’ exclaimed Mrs. Kearas with some tartness.

As Willie took the piece of bread out of her hand and commenced eating, Mrs. Kearas regarded him approvingly, and condescended to express her opinion to Ann that they would make a good boy of him after a little pains, and then demanded, ‘What’s your name, little gentleman?’

‘Willie, ma’am.’

‘Willie!—Willie what? They’re all Willies here,’—an assertion that caused the boys to smile, as being something funny, and to which Mr. Kearas was about to object, but that Mrs. K.’s frown indicated that it would be wiser to take another sup at the saucer.

‘What’s your other name, child?’

‘Willie Wilt’—

‘Well, I know. I heard you say Willie,’ interrupted Mrs. Kearas. ‘I’m not deaf. But everybody’s got a second name. What’s his name, Kearas?’

‘His name—his name!’ said the gentleman appealed to, as he laid down his saucer. ‘Let me see now;’ and he fumbled in his pockets until he pulled out a confused heap of papers, and began very hurriedly to overhaul them, thrusting back into his side pocket such as he felt sure could have no connection with the question, whilst some fell on the ground.

‘Dear me! can’t you mind such a little boy’s name as that?’

‘Oh, of course!’ exclaimed he. ‘Let me see.’

Flurried by his wife’s petulance, he made an effort to recall the name by tapping his forehead with his fingers, but this called forth a further remonstrance from the schoolmistress, that drove back any thoughts that this impromptu aid to memory was summoning to the front. In default, Mr. Kearas laid hold of the first name that presented itself, and that he knew had some connection with the subject of inquiry. ‘Oh! ah! I’ve got it now! Scarr—Scarr,—that’s it. Dear me, how came it to slip my memory?’

Upon this announcement the two brothers experienced a sudden inclination to giggle, the effort to restrain which, but

for the timely covering of their mouths with their hands, would have resulted in an unpleasant expulsion of tea and bread across the table in the direction of Mrs. Kearas. That lady, however, came to their further aid by informing them that such behaviour would lead to their being sent from the table; whereupon the boys turned very red, and hung their heads, and made some commendable efforts to direct the contents of their mouths to the proper channel.

Willie in the meantime had looked appealingly at Mrs. Kearas, as though he would say, 'Don't call me that.'

'What name?' said Mrs. Kearas, rather surprised at the announcement, not having heard before that the person named had any children.

'Please, ma'am, that is not my name.'

'Silence! Little boys shouldn't contradict,' interposed Mr. Grippem.

'Who's your mother, child?' said Mrs. Kearas, which was rather an odd question for Mrs. Kearas.

Willie looked first at the schoolmistress, and then at the master, and commenced twisting his coat-buttons, but as no one seemed able to assist him, he replied hesitatingly, 'Aunt Fanny, I think;' and then looked imploringly at the boys, who were making desperate efforts to control themselves.

'Yes, that's his name, my dear, now I come to think of it,' said the schoolmaster, well pleased at this timely aid, though undoubtedly the name was as new to himself as to his wife; 'that's it, only'—and he winked at her—'you understand.'

'Oh! ah! that's it, is it?—the old story. Poor thing! there's plenty of them here. But what's her other name?—That's not her surname.'

'Well, no, I don't think that's it quite, but I've got it down somewhere how he's to be called. I'll find it;—the child don't know;' and Mr. Kearas winked again.

'How should he, poor thing?' said Mrs. Kearas, looking very compassionately at Willie. 'As the good book says, it's a wise child as knows its father and mother, but it takes a wiser one to know—to know,—what is it, Kearas?'

'I don't know just now, but I've got it down somewhere, and I'll tell you to-morrow,' said the schoolmaster, presuming she had again reference to the boy's name.

'Have you finished, boys?' said the mistress, whereupon the three pair of eyes were instinctively directed towards the

empty bread and butter plates. 'Then you can leave the table.'

At this intimation Miss Ann and the whole company rose, and each repaired to their usual avocations.

After depositing the sugar and tea in the large caddy, which she carefully locked, Mrs. Kearas took Willie by the hand, and, bidding the other two follow, conducted them into the kitchen.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FAMILY PHYSICIAN—ANOTHER BLACK DAY.

SEATED at the large kitchen window, looking directly upon the rookery, were two men, very energetically employed at their respective callings, and which, judging from the quantity of articles awaiting their turn, they were likely so to be to some indefinite future. They were the shoemaker and tailor of the establishment, which posts—or rather *seats* of honour—they had filled from some equally indefinite past.

Jurdy, the designation by which the cobbler was known, and answering to Georgy, was a thick-set, black-visaged man, of taciturn disposition, but possessed of no peculiarity to distinguish him from any other of his trade, unless it might be the regularity with which, week in and week out, he occupied his bench from morning till night, ingeniously contriving to add another patch to an already over-mended boot, or, as he was at the moment of Mrs. Kearas' entrance, busily at work fitting a thick iron heel-tap and toepiece to an old shoe, that threatened to fall to pieces at every blow of the hammer, notwithstanding the firm grip thereof by the leather strap that held it on to his knee.

His fellow-workman, Tommy Kaily, occupied a more onerous position in the establishment ; as master tailor, his office required him to personally inspect the state of every boy's wardrobe, the more especially that portion allotted to present use,—a duty that necessarily required an individual acquaintance with each scholar, who, as a general rule, was desirous to stand well with Tommy, particularly testified to on 'parcel days,' when he became the recipient of several plugs of tobacco, or a new pipe, or a paper of snuff. These testimonials, however, could not be offered by all,—some, as will be hereafter seen, never being so fortunate as to become possessed of such coveted treasures, and who consequently might, as far as Tommy's art was concerned,

occasionally be distinguished from the rest by the indiscriminate pattern of the patches that stopped large breaches in the knee or seat or other parts of their trousers, or arms or cuffs of their jackets,—a black piece of cloth being made often to contrast with the colour of what was originally grey homespun, or other opposite shade of the garment into which it was introduced ; thereby adding a grotesqueness to an already sufficiently grotesque outfit, but against which there was no appeal.

In original outfits Tommy might have excelled as a cutter, his style and judgment on all occasions being accounted of the first order ; but as it was rare that he was called on to display his Buckmasterian talents on a new article, it was the more creditable to his skill, that he contrived to convert the particular articles of clothing requiring his metamorphic hand into excellent fits. No matter what might have been the proportions of the original owner,—whether twice the height, double the breadth, or only half the dimensions of the intended wearer,—after passing through his artistic hands the garment was invariably pronounced an excellent fit, confirmed by Jurdy on appeal, tears or protestations of their new owners notwithstanding, who on every remonstrance were consoled by the assurance that if they could only see themselves in a glass, they would go into ecstasies. But as there was no glass,—if we except the small broken piece on the window by which Tommy shaved on Sunday mornings, and that was just large enough to reflect half his chin at a time,—they were obliged to have recourse to a more direct mode of inspection.

‘There, look at that,’ said the aggrieved lad,—‘look at that now,’ as he stretched out an arm, the sleeve of which projected beyond the fingers, or held forth a leg, the shape and foot of which was concealed by the massive proportions of the pantaloons. ‘Just see there : how could a fellow take hold of anything with such a sleeve, or run with such legs?’ But Tommy, although inexorable, was always ready with the comforting assurance that he’d soon grow into the one, or that the other would *shrink* down to him. Or if the converse was the complaint, and the boy extended his leg or arm to protest against their reaching only half-way down the particular limb, then he was as consolingly assured that the accommodating garment would *stretch*. But should these guarantees fail to allay the disgust, then there was the usual set-off of splendid pocke into which Tommy would thrust the boy’s hands, and chuckle

the lad brought out a well-chewed quid. Pockets, however, being invaluable to a Grumbleby, generally acted as a compensation, and sent the complainant off partially content; knowing that, besides himself, he was not likely to interest any others in a style of dress common to all, or even to attract attention by its *outré* dimensions.

But besides his position as 'master of the robes,' Tommy Kaily was held in much esteem by the authorities of the Hall for his professed knowledge of the apothecary's art; and it was wonderful into what a variety of electuaries, elixirs, tonics, and other compositions, the few staples forming his *materia medica*, culled in the fields and garden, were compounded, and which probably were as effective as though their virtues had been secured by patent. In the bitter class of herbs Mr. Kaily had great faith, much more than his patients, on whom they generally acted in a very summary manner. Possessed of such valuable knowledge, it is not to be wondered that Mr. Kaily held, in addition to the office of master tailor, the responsible post of surgeon and apothecary in ordinary to the Grumbleby institution, whereat his practice was certainly extensive enough to enable him to experiment to some purpose. At one time his professional talent had even been in request beyond the precincts of the Hall; but whether the craft felt themselves in danger of being supplanted, or otherwise, certain it is, owing to one or two rather doubtful results of his prescriptions, it was intimated to him that it would be prudent to confine his talents to a more contracted range, and as a consequence, except in isolated cases, he was retained solely as the family physician of Grumbleby.

Tommy's physique by no means indicated the possession of any rare abilities. His head and frontal piece were long and narrow, his nose was hawk-like, whilst his cheek-bones were prominent, rendered more so from the hollow beneath, occasioned principally by the loss of his side teeth; a long forehead, thin grey and black hair, and grey watery eyes, with a twinkle of humour, that also played around his mouth, completed his physiognomy. His deeply-stained front dentals proclaimed his devotion to tobacco, a plug of which was rarely out of his mouth, thereby keeping his jaws in constant motion, and emitting an odorous breath that could be detected at arm's-length. His long thin body had become rounded by his continued steady application to his trade; his unusually long arms gave him an advantage in seizing any waggish boy who attempted to

reciprocate Tommy's tricks, for which he had a merry propensity. He must originally, when standing upright, have been tall, but, besides the stoop in his shoulders, he had an unusual curvature in his legs, so that when his feet came together a considerable ellipsis occurred, very much in the fashion of a pair of calipers.

There was a little tradition current among the boys, purporting to account for the singular shape of Tommy's 'pins,' as they termed them; the accuracy thereof, however, was undecided, as any reference to their owner on the subject usually elicited some response, either in a sudden assault on the retreating questioner with the flat side of his sleeve-board, or, if caught by having miscalculated the distance, in the compulsory taste of a few leaves of pigtail.

The tradition ran thus:—Once on a time, Tommy, who was a great Nimrod in his early days, passionately fond of the chase, was following the hounds, or, more correctly, they were following him, for, being a swift runner, and well acquainted with the surrounding country whereby to make short cuts, he was in advance of dogs and men, when he saw the fox rising over a mound, and making for a bush not far distant from either. Knowing the nature of the ground in that direction, Tommy gave chase with accelerated speed, and rapidly shortened the distance between himself and the animal. Suddenly the fox came to a dead halt, as anticipated by his pursuer, for he had come to the brow of a declivity little less than perpendicular. A shout and a tally-ho, followed by the cry of a leading hound, that had regained the scent, and now burst with the pack in full view, caused Reynard to look in the direction in which Tommy was coming full tilt, with the intention of escaping on that side of the field, but, discovering the tailor within a few yards of him, there seemed no alternative but to go for it, and down he went, sliding on his haunches, his fore-feet firmly planted in advance. Impelled by the excitement, over too went Tommy, sliding *à la* Reynard; the impetus of weight, however, carrying him more swiftly, he rapidly closed in upon the animal, who was evidently intending to bring up at a narrow projecting ledge, sufficiently broad to afford a covert amongst a small copse of long grass and furze growing thereon, but just as he reached it, Tommy, unable to control his speed, came bolt on to the ledge. Over went the affrighted animal, after him bounded the equally affrighted tailor, vainly clutching at the furze and weeds to stay his flight. It was a leap for life on the part of the fox; on the part of the man, very like a leap

out of it, and so regarded by the huntsman, who had arrived at the brink of the descent in time to witness this last manœuvre. But without paying further attention thereto, as it was too early in the day to be balked of a run, the gentlemen of the hunt now re-assembled, decided to call off the dogs, and to break fresh cover, and before long their deep bay was heard dying off in the opposite direction.

All that subsequently transpired with respect to Tommy was, that a few hours afterwards he was picked up by some farm-labourers passing the foot of the steep hill, in a senseless condition, his legs twisted almost out of their sockets, yet clasping with vice-like grip the fox, who lay dead between his dislocated limbs, which, notwithstanding surgical aid, refused ever after to resume their original form.

Thus ran the tale, which with various readings was transmitted to the generations that passed through Grumbleby training, and by whom, in virtue thereof, he was, without exception, ever regarded as a hero of the proper type, and fit to stand side by side with the renowned whose exploits are chronicled in 'Beauty and the Beast' and other equally marvellous stories, then the staple literature of the young. The fame of this adventure obtained him far more consideration than all his fashionable tailoring, or even his lotions and purgatives. It only remains, to complete the acquaintance with Mr. Kaily, to add that his person was encased in a long, faded, colourless waistcoat reaching to his hips, with very capacious pockets; tight fustian sleeves obviated the necessity for a coat, and a guernsey shirt was worn in lieu of a linen one; his peculiar lower limbs were clothed in knee-corduroys and ribbed worsted stockings, terminating in a pair of capacious shoes, whereby his historical legs were exhibited to great advantage.

An introduction of the three boys to these two functionaries now took place, whereupon an examination of feet and bodies ensued, presumably with a view to their subsequent investiture in the scholastic uniform; but as no figures were taken down, the tapes being merely used to ascertain lengths and breadths, it must be assumed it was to be provided from store, of the usual style. This ceremony having been gone through, they were conducted by Miss Ann back to the parlour.

But the black day came at last, as all black days do, much faster than the white days; so, a few mornings after the above interview with the master tailor and shoemaker, on waking and rising at the instigation of the senior usher, being his first visit on

such occasion, the three latest arrivals were directed by that individual to hasten down to the school-room at the same time as the other boys, and informed that in future they were to sleep in the same rooms as the rest. He also directed them to dress themselves in the apparel lying in sets at the foot of the bed, which had been substituted for their own that had disappeared, and then left them to themselves.

As the clothing was in all respects similar to the costumes already described, their first essay in the art of adaptation proved as puzzling to Willie and his companions as it had done to all preceding them. Although there was certainly nothing redundant, yet the style was so unlike anything that had come under their notice hitherto, that it was not until they had tried and re-tried, this way and that, behind and before, and compared sizes and shapes, that at length, in desperation, they concluded to don the garments without further reference to any such guiding tokens. Fortunately for Willie, beyond allowing ample room for a year's growth, his clothes fitted him better than did those of the two others, although equally grotesque.

At the conclusion of an occupation that had absorbed so much of their thoughts to the exclusion of all else, it very naturally occurred to them to ask of each other if they thought 'they would do,' and how they looked. For a few moments the inspection was made in silence, as though at a loss to express themselves or their due appreciation of the extraordinary metamorphosis that had taken place. At first it occurred to them that they were suddenly transformed into the motley beings that, during the last few days, had been bobbing before and around them, and from contact with whom they had instinctively shrunk, and engaged for ever to avoid; and lo! by some metempsychosis they were the very boys themselves! There they stood,—the same patched elbows, greasy sleeves, and buttonless jackets; the twin grey patches on the knees of the brown trousers, the legs whereof only reached to the calves. It was only the night before, as they retired to bed, that they repeated their vows of constancy and enduring friendship; and now they were shrinking from each other with a feeling akin to loathing.

As they regarded their altered appearance, they almost doubted their own identity. Tears silently started to their eyes and coursed down their cheeks, which, whilst they bespoke their sense of vexation at the circumstances in which they were found, also relieved them. As the elder raised his dimmed eyes, and

caught the rueful countenances of the other two, an intuitive sense of the ridiculous overmastered him, and he burst into a fit of laughter, followed by the others, which was renewed on every fresh survey, until, almost convulsed, the tears streamed down their faces; wiping which with their sleeves, they too became more in harmony with their general appearance.

As Willie rose from the bed, on which he had thrown himself, overpowered by his risibility, his eye caught sight of the patch that adorned the seat of the younger boy's trousers, and, pointing it out to the elder, they both went off again into a loud laugh, but in which, as it was rather personal, Tommy did not join.

'You needn't to laugh; look at yourselves,' said the little fellow. 'I'm sure those big greasy cuffs on Willie's coat look just as queer; and look at Harry's coat,'—meaning his brother,—'down to his heels.'

At these personal allusions the laughter subsided, and each made a further inspection of himself in the direction indicated, at the conclusion of which the elder pulled off his coat, and, dashing it to the ground, declared 'he was not going to wear it, —be hanged if he was! He'd have his own, or he'd write to his father.' A pause ensued, and each stood looking at the slighted garment, beginning to form similar resolutions in regard to their own outfit, when they were disturbed by some one approaching in shoeless feet, and a figure entered the room, the door of which was open, attired in much the same description of clothing as themselves.

He looked at one, then at the other, and then around the room at the numerous articles on the shelves, which appeared to have special attractions for him, for he began a conversation to himself that seemed to imply that he recognised them, and had been acquainted with their former owners. Of a sudden, recollecting, he addressed himself to the boys, and said, 'Wha's keepin' ye? Aw tel't 'ee, young uns, ef tha isn't doan in a jiffey, awd noa be in tha hides. Grippy ull pitch into yees, aw tel't yees.'

'Who's Grippy?' said the big boy, making out that much of his speech. 'I don't care for Grippy; I ain't going down without my coat.'

The strange boy did not respond immediately, seeing he was just then occupied in taking the measure of each boy, with the laudable intention of ascertaining whether he could not thrash

the whole lot,—a feat reckoned amongst the chiefest attainments of the Grumbleby lads.

‘A’ whoo! tha doan’t care for Grippy! Oh, be golly! Doan’t ta, tho’!’ He instinctively rubbed his back. ‘Tha’lt sooin change tha tune, young un; ’t wur he that sent ma here. Aw say, es this bed soaft?’ and he jumped on it, whilst the trio looked on at the uncouth boy, perplexed at his speech and bearing. Having indulged in several fresh leaps on the bed, and rolling over it something after the canine mode, wriggling on his back and kicking up his heels in the air, he turned a somersault on to the floor, and, approaching the elder, said, ‘Wha’s t’ name?’

‘Eh?’ said the boy addressed.

‘Wha’s t’ ca’ ye?’

The boys looked at one another, and then smiled.

‘Doan’t tha laugh, nah. Aw can lick tha, ye know.’

‘What?’ said Harry.

‘Aw can thrash ye ony day.’

‘No, you can’t.’

‘Can aw noa?’ said he, at the same time giving the other a blow in the chest that sent him almost over a trunk.

‘Now, you let him alone,’ said the younger lad, stepping to his brother’s side.

‘Whew!’ said the Grumbleby, ‘wha, aw’ll serve tha t’ same, ye varment;’ and he was about suiting the word with a blow, when Willie rushed up, and, seizing him by his extensive tail, pulled him back. ‘Dang ma owd shoon!’ said the bright youth, as he disengaged himself from Willie’s hold, his temper now risen to the required height; ‘coom on.’ His capacious mantle dropped from his back as he shook himself out of it, and commenced a series of pugilistic manœuvres, at one time advancing his right foot, then supplanting it by the left, then the right again, followed by two or three jerky motions of the arms and clenched fists, as he struck out into the space before him. ‘Coom on, aw say, the hul kit o’ ye.’

‘You’d better mind what you’re at, or you’ll get something you don’t like.’

‘Coom on, my Molyneux,’ said the boy, an expression that had reference to a noted prize-fight that had lately come off, in which, it was veraciously asserted at the Hall, the opponent of Molyneux, of the name of Crib, had in the last round used the marvellous and grandiloquent words,—‘Bring all your horses and chariots, and I’ll beat you the next round;’ which he accordingly

did by breaking Molyneux's jaw. However that may be, certain it is that for some weeks after the report of this astounding feat reached their neighbourhood, a most exciting state of fisticuffs recommenced at the several schools, challenges being transmitted and accepted all round. 'Coom on.' Approaching the elder, he was about aiming a blow at him as he stood on the defensive, when the other two rushed in again and seized him as best they could; and thereupon, aided by the bigger one, a short tussle ensued, in the midst whereof all four fell pell-mell to the ground, the pugilist striking the back of his head against the bedstead. Scrambling up as fast as they could, they drew off a few paces, and the Grumbleby commenced rubbing his head, during which operation he exclaimed, 'Hang tha young cubs! ef aw doan't blacken t' eyes, ma name's not Kappa;' and thereupon, turning his back to the door, he resumed his scientific attitudes, inviting them in a louder key to 'coom on.' At that instant the attention of the elder boy, who was facing him, was attracted to the door by an advancing shadow, followed by the immediate appearance of the senior usher thereat, who halted to make a reconnaissance. 'Coom on,' said the belligerent Kappa, thereupon advancing his foot, and in the act of delivering what was intended for a Cribbean blow, when he was arrested by a stinger on the side of his head. For the moment Kappa was under the delusion that he was being again attacked from behind by one of the younger lads, so, keeping one eye on the elder, he turned sideways, and exclaiming, 'Tha young peckles, bud aw'll bray thee for yon,' was in the act of striking out in the direction of the supposed assailant, when he found himself in the iron grip of the usher, who thereupon began to cuff, and twist, and shake him most unmercifully, heedless of his protestations that he 'warn't doing nothing, and wouldn't do it again.'

As soon as Mr. Grippem had satisfied the ends of justice, he concluded by ejecting him from the room, but called him back for his coat, which he threw after him, and in possession of which Kappa lost no time in disappearing. The usher then informed the boys that, had he his cane with him, he would expedite their movements also; whereupon Harry, as directed, hastily ensconced himself in the rejected coat, and, followed by his companions, was about descending the main stairs, when Mr. Grippem called them back, and informed them that henceforth that mode of descent was prohibited to them, and, bidding them follow, led the way down the flight appropriated to the school.

They had not made their appearance on the playground but a short time, when they were recognised by the scholars, who at once, by the change in their dress, saw that, as in their own prior experience, the evil day had arrived when, descending from their privileged positions, they were thrown upon the tender mercies of the school, without other protection than their own prowess might gain them. But this recall of their own short-lived favouritism usually acted as a temporary deterrent to any exhibition of the harsher treatment in reserve for all new boys, as though some sympathetic chord, long dormant, was awakened by this reminder of their own earlier sorrow and dreary experience, when they too first realized the stern reality of the life on which they were entering. So for a few days it was rare that any one molested the already sufficiently stricken lads, who generally found some one ready to initiate them into the mysteries of roll-call, fast games, dodges, and dark practices, that at the first caused a shock, but that familiarity and necessity soon accustomed to. The meal dodge was only learned by detective experience, but hunger materially assisted in the revelation of this dexterous feat.

With aching hearts the three boys wandered around in company, at first seldom apart, but, as they gradually assimilated to the general character of the school, this union sensibly diminished, until, as in most other precedent instances, the triple friends ceased any longer to regard one another with any peculiar attachment,—the brothers even, according to usage, being the least in accord.

If any beneficial effect could result from such estrangement, it would be found in its not involving any other person in individual scrapes, or the necessity of standing by one another, which certainly was an advantage in a school governed by the peculiar usages of these model institutions. And then it evolved whatever was in the boy of self-reliance and independence, as well as stirred up any sluggishly-inclined youth to energetic action; all of which were essentially requisite to protect against or mitigate the consequences of the arbitrary and bullying conduct of such as were able to assert it.

No complaint was tolerated, either against teacher or scholar; any attempt to do so would have drawn upon its subject a punishment and persecution unbearable. Under any provocation or suffering it was therefore never made, save by the unsophisticated new boy, but whom the rude discipline of the school soon taught never to repeat it.

The outcome of this was, that a sense of power (not an intellectual or moral one, it must be avowed) permeated the whole school, and, though undefined, it was irresistible, manifesting itself—except in a few constitutionally weaker samples who always went to the wall—in a manly self-assertion, too manly because too early developed in its harsher undisciplined form, well fitting its subjects to cope with the world, if called into the arena of strife and dogmatic assertion, but utterly incapacitating them for the more refined and generous walks of life. Every boy who entered these establishments found entailed on him an inheritance of sentiment enjoyed by his predecessor, and transmitted to him, to be again handed down in perpetuity to his successors,—a sentiment that, overriding every other consideration, taught him that his especial business was to look out for number one, and that any amelioration of his lot depended entirely on his ability, physically or mentally, to cope with the antagonism that surrounded him. The hand that hit the hardest, or, in default, the brain that could devise the most craftily, would come off best. Of course there were solitary exceptions.

Another peculiarity of these academies, already slightly apparent, but with which the reader will become more conversant as he becomes better acquainted with the students of Grumbleby, was the dialect in which some of the boys conveyed their thoughts and wishes to each other. We sympathize with the reader, aware that the due appreciation or comprehension of the language must imply a superior education, and an acquaintance therewith not usually enjoyed by other than natives of the province in which these seats of learning were situated, by whom, however, we doubt not, some improvements both in the orthography and etymology could be made, many years having elapsed since the author had the privilege of taking part therein, and never having learned the language grammatically. More or less, most of the boys affected some of the more common expressions; whilst a few, repudiating it altogether, were yet compelled to become familiar therewith, in order to maintain intercourse with the domestics and villagers, or those boys whose long stay at the place, apparently abandoned by their friends, had rendered them so habituated thereto, that they had fallen into its use until it had become their vernacular, and they were unable to communicate their ideas in any other tongue.

On the return to their homes of such as were fortunate enough to be recalled thereto, and whose predilection for the language

and manners had made them proficient therein. The first impression conveyed to their amazed relatives, anxiously anticipating the high culture that their scions could display, was that of alarm, under the nervous apprehension that some wild Orson had been consigned to them by mistake. However, eventually reassured by certain marks of identification, or other equally satisfactory evidence, they became agreeably reconciled on discovering, in the little account of 'extras' that always accompanied a returned scholar, a charge for languages, and thereupon sagely concluded that the 'unknown tongue' was of the number, and thenceforth applauded a system that by compelling the pupil to converse therein rendered him so fluent.

CHAPTER XXII.

PARCEL DAY.

‘**I** WONDER if there’s a parcel for me,’ said a little boy to another, as they stood by the desk in the school-room, into which several small groups were gathered, all distinguished by an unusual sprightliness of manner and gleeful converse.

‘I’ll get one, I know,’ said the boy addressed; thereupon hopping on one leg around the other, and smiling with delight at the thought.

‘He’ll have one for me too, you see if he don’t,’ chimed in a third, from the top of the desk to which he had been sentenced to pass the day between school-hours, and was endeavouring to do so as pleasantly as possible by skipping with a rope, made out of bits of string, cloth, and rags tied together, counting each jump,—‘One hundred, one hundred and one, one hundred and two.’

‘You know you owe me half,’ interposed a boy on the other side of the desk.

‘No, not half now.’

‘Oh, Jem! listen to yon; don’t he, now?’ And he pulled at Jem’s shoulder to gain his attention, but who was too much occupied in advancing a similar claim on another debtor to attend to him, and thereupon threatened to give him a dig if he did that again.

‘One hundred and ten, one hundred and eleven, one hundred and’—

‘All in, all in!’ shouted at that instant, and followed by a rush at the school-room door, through which the boys came pouring in, put an end to skipping and any further arrangement of debits and credits. And now ensued a scene of rare occurrence. A small boy, who an hour before would have received a thrashing for his temerity, was hanging with hands clasped around the

neck of some bigger lad, who only laughed at his daring ; whilst another was arm and arm with his worst-used fag, or actually being hugged by the boy he yesterday gave a good drubbing to. Then followed a wild screeching, hallooing, dancing, and chasing over desks and forms and around boys, one of whom, as he fell, was immediately utilized as the nucleus upon which 'more sacks on the mill' were piled, until, half-smothered, and flattened to a pancake, he was released to give chase to the one on whom he had fixed to vent his wrath, but was arrested by half-a-dozen youngsters, with beaming faces, pulling him on all sides, until the whole lot fell over in a heap, and scrambled up with loud laughter, each striving to be the foremost, lest he in turn might become the mill. Never did such an exciting scene occur at any other time at the Hall ; even the smallest boy kicked the largest with impunity, the only retaliation being that the said small boy was caught up and tossed on the shoulder of the big one, who thereupon started off in a run, pursued by half-a-dozen others, who at any other time would have quailed at his frown.

'Here they are !' shouted a couple of lads who had been keeping watch outside the door, and in another second had taken their seats at the desk, quickly followed by the rest, all re-echoing the shout, 'Here they are !' And now every eye was intently fixed on the doorway.

The first person who made his appearance was Mr. Kearas ; next in order came Mr. Kearas, junior, who had returned the previous day from Barnard Castle in charge of the precious freight, that had remained there ever since Mr. Barry's arrival with Willie and his fellow-passengers, there being no regular conveyance therefrom to Grumbleby ; after the junior Kearas came Messrs. Grippem and Shadd, each with an armful of paper packages, whilst Tommy and Jurdy brought up the rear, laden with boxes and baskets piled above their heads. The entrance of the two latter called forth a simultaneous 'Oh ! oh !' with a very disturbed movement of bodies as the boys turned round, eager, as they passed on, to feast their eyes on the load, and, if possible, ascertain the directions on the packages, to which several instantly laid claim, as they pointed out some one in particular to the boy at their side.

On arriving at the further end of the room the procession halted, and the boxes and packages were placed on the platform and desk of the usher, whereupon Tommy and his aid retired, not, however, until they had become the targets for chewed paper

bullets, old copy-books, remnants of hats, and the like, all of which was taken in good part by those worthies, provoking merely a few shakes of the fist from Tommy, and a knowing nod or two of the head and winks of the eye from Jurdy, implying they would bide their time and take their revenge in the usual mode,—a few longer brads through the sole of the next shoes mended, or some additionally offensive patch, being considered a due compensation, always provided they were not bought off in the meantime, which generally happened.

A few preliminary proceedings, in which a comparison of lists, and an examination of entries on slips of paper with entries in a memorandum-book, produced by the younger Kearas, took place at the desk, at the conclusion whereof the usher commanded silence and gave the order to stand round. In the eager haste to comply with the mandate, more than one form with the boys thereon was upset, and which of course called forth a remonstrance from Mr. Grippem, that in the excitement was disregarded. As soon as order had been restored and the roll called, Mr. Kearas, senior, rose from the stool at the desk and took off his spectacles, wiped and replaced them at two-thirds distance, that he might see over them, then cleared his throat, advanced to the edge of the platform, and looked blandly around the school. The pushing and buzzing stopped, and every eye was fixed on the great man.

‘Boys,’ began Mr. Kearas, and then paused, and once more reviewed their appearance, during which every one endeavoured to look as attentive as possible under the tantalizing process. ‘All present, Mr. Grippem?’

Mr. Grippem, who had not paid attention to the roll-call, was about to repeat the question to his deputy, when the whole school spared him the reference by simultaneously shouting, ‘Yes, sir!’

‘Oh, very good. Boys, I’m glad to find you’ve all behaved so well during my late obstructed visit to the city of London, a place so dear to the vast majority of you, excepting those who don’t come from there,—a voyage I take for the benefit, as I always tell you at these times, of boys so dear to me—I may say so dear to *all*. Ain’t they, Mr. Minas?’

Mr. Minas nodded assent. ‘Eh, Mr. Grippem?’

Mr. Grippem nodded, and looked very fiercely over at Kappa, who was just then amusing himself by putting a straw into the next boy’s ear, the said Kappa knowing from experience that *his* interest in the present proceedings was *nil*.

‘Yes, of course. Well, as I was saying—as I was saying,’—Mr. Kearas seemed to have lost himself,—‘well, *nemtorly* vow what I said, as you boys as are learned in Latin say. Howsom-ever, I told all your payrents and gardens how happy you all were under the benine influenza of Mrs. Kearas and the other members of our happy family; and how none of you weren’t tired of us, and didn’t want to come home, as they’d see by the letters you’d writ; and how you wanted to stop here a long time yet, and which is very credible to you all, as they agreed.’ Here one or two boys seemed somewhat disturbed.

‘You, Trotter,’ said Mr. Grippem, ‘what are you snivelling at?’

‘Trotter, did you say?’ said the schoolmaster. ‘Ah, yes! I remember; my dear boy Trotter, your father was delighted to hear you were so comfortable, and your poor mother shed tears of joy.’

This proof of affectionate interest was too much for Trotter’s full heart, so he broke down, and leaned his head on the desk in front of him, and sobbed.

‘Yes, I knew you couldn’t stand it, and how you’d feel when you heard it; but don’t cry, you’re not a-going, for your mother, when she heard how anxious you were to remain, said you should stay a long while yet.’

On this further announcement Trotter became so uproarious, that, in order to stop the interruption, Mr. Grippem ordered him to the other end of the room, with the promise that if he did not immediately stop his blubbling, he would settle with him at the conclusion of the proceedings.

‘Well,’ said Mr. Kearas, somewhat disconcerted at this unseasonable interruption, ‘not to make a long story of it, and for which time would fail, I come to a subject that I know you are all thinking about. Then Mr. Kearas smiled a bland smile, and looked at the officials by whom he was surrounded, who in turn looked at each other and smiled too, in appreciation of the profundity of the senior Kearas’ discernment, evidencing such an acquaintance with human nature. Whereupon Mr. Kearas looked at the boys, and then at the parcels, then at the boys again, and continued thus until the smile became universal. Mr. Kearas was charmed at his success in thus restoring the harmony interrupted by Trotter, and producing such a oneness of feeling, and, after another gracious beam over the mesmerized circle, he resumed,—

'At much personal—and I may add individual, as well as domestic—risk and inconvenience to myself, I took charge of a lot of funny, queer-looking articles, entrusted to my care by fond and loving payrents. Those funny articles have at length reached their destination, and are—where, boys?—at Barnard Castle?' Mr. Kearas pretended to look in the direction of the place named.

'No, sir;' 'On the platform, sir;' 'Them boxes and parcels, sir;' was the animated response of the school, who entered heartily into what they understood to be intended for a display of humour.

'No, nonsense! These can't be them—impossible! How did they get there? what fairy brought them?'

'You fetched them!'

'Noa, nah, deedn't I see 'em en Tammy's neives; it wur he an' Jurdy fetched 'em from 'castle, t'warn't noa fairy.'

'Don't let's have any more of that talk, you Kappa, or I'll fairy you,' said Mr. Grippem; whereupon Mr. Kearas assumed a more serious demeanour.

'Boys, if you find your parcels open, you know the reason. Regard for your healths, and lest you should overload your stomachs, has made Mrs. Kearas, whose motherly tender heart is always on the look-out for your goods, open them and look into them; that's why they're open, for says she, when her eyes fell on the inside of the covers, "Mr. Kearas, they'll all be sick." Whereby, if you don't find more nor the half the letters say, that's explained.'

We shall not follow the garrulous schoolmaster in his address, the length of which fully tested the patience both of the scholars and officials.

Mr. Kearas then pulled a handful of letters out of his capacious side pocket, exclaiming as he did so, 'Here they are! here they come!' A rush was made by the irrepressible boys towards the platform. 'Now stand off, stand off, whilst I see who they are for.' Thereupon he readjusted his glasses and commenced deciphering the addresses, but was compelled to call Mr. Kearas junior to his aid, to assist in spelling out the several names; and, on tendering them to their rightful owner, they were clutched at by a score of hands, which rendered it necessary that all should resume their position around the room, and that those for whom they were intended should be called up to the desk. On receiving the little missive, the favoured one became

for a moment the object of general regard, until the next diverted the attention, in like manner to become the envied of the rest.

It *might* have moved some of the parents had they witnessed the effect on those lads as they took the letters into their hands. Over the countenance of one a pallor as of death was spread, succeeded by a faintness that caused him to totter to his place. Another, on the contrary, was crimsoned by a rush of blood to the head. Others, under the excitement, crushed the coveted billet like a piece of waste-paper, or tore it in half in the haste to unfold it; whilst the eyes of one or two were too dimmed by tears to read a sentence, but which the boy by his side tried to do for him.

The same prudence that had actuated Mrs. Kearas in examining the contents of the parcels, had been exercised by the two Kearas men with regard to the letters, all of which had been opened, and any passage that it was thought might have a tendency to disturb the current of feeling that it was advisable should run in one direction, was expunged without regard to the sense of the rest. Such as could not be thus amended were entirely suppressed, thereby sparing the boy any possible emotion, save that of bitter disappointment, at the non-receipt of the longed-for and long-expected letter.

As soon as the letter delivery was completed, as the eye glanced around, it might have read in many a face the effect of the relaxation of buoyant hopes that had upheld many a heart, and made it cling, despite former disappointments, to the persuasion that *this* time he would be remembered; but once more the heart was sick, for the hope was once more deferred. 'Forgotten again—never again going to write!' and the little head drooped to hide the falling tear, but perchance not before he was detected in such 'softness' by some older boy, who, long habituated to such neglect, simulated indifference, and affected even to despise all such trumpery, and thereupon consoled his more juvenile fellow-scholar with the expression, 'Wait till you've been here as long as me, and you won't care the toss of a brass farden about such scribbles.'

'Now, boys, we'll give out the parcels.' At this announcement there was a revival of interest; it might be, after all, that a parcel could come without being accompanied by a letter, and so all were again on the *qui vive*. As the senior usher read the names on the several parcels they were repeated by the master,

and the boy ordered to come up, which he obeyed with an alacrity that affected the whole school, and on his return to his place created a tumult that was with some difficulty repressed by the usher. At the conclusion of this part of the ceremony, a kindred state of mind to that existing at the close of the first part succeeded,—this time, however, if possible, more keen, as testified to by the twitching of faces and convulsive movements of some of the stronger ones, who had evidently not counted on the possibility of their turn having arrived when they must henceforth take their place amongst the neglected. Unable to endure the thought, one boy under an uncontrollable impulse cried out, ‘Oh, sir, please, didn’t mother send me nothing?’

‘Who’s that?’ rejoined Mr. Kearas,—‘you, Mount? No; your father says he can’t be bothered sending parcels, and thinks you’re well done to in being allowed to remain at such a ‘cademy.’

‘Now, boys, again it’s been my privilege to return to the bosom of my family,—for so I call you all—all—every man-jack.’ His eye ran round the room with the look of a fond parent, as he placed his hand upon his heart, but in doing so his glance fell on one of the boys, who was leaning his head on his hand, the elbow resting on the desk at the further end of the room, and just then looking quite vacantly at Mr. Kearas. ‘Ah! that reminds me, Harfagr.’ At the mention of his name the boy started and his eyes sparkled,—what, so many times forgotten, had they remembered him at last?—and he was in the act of advancing, when Mr. Grippem ordered him to fall back into his place. ‘I’m afraid your father’s run away; the house was shut up, and no one knew where he’d gone to. I’ll have to make some arrangement about you. I can’t afford to keep no boy in the style they’re kept here without pay, and permit ‘em to share in the extra privileges and all those sort of things, for nothing; it’s outrageous. Mr. Grippem, I suppose he eats as much as any of them?’

Mr. Grippem affirmed he did; indeed, that he ate (he might with strict propriety have said as much as he got, but he said) twice as much as he ought, for a confirmation of which he appealed to Mr. Shadd, who declared that ‘he ate enormously,’—a most unjustifiable act under the circumstances, and whereupon Mr. Kearas, junior, suggested that he be immediately expelled; whereat Mr. Kearas, senior, said he would have to turn it over in his mind; that he had no idea he was such a character, and

that he would consult Mrs. Kearas on the matter at once,—an announcement that caused more than one ungrateful scholar to wish he was in Harfagr's place.

At the conclusion of this part of the proceedings the school-master stated he should leave his son to settle the quarter's accounts, and retire, having spent so large a portion of the morning with them, which was doubtless a very exceptional event.

As the door closed, Mr. Kearas, junior, rose and occupied the position his father had just vacated. He looked around the school, smiled, and in other respects imitated his honoured parent, and then addressed them,—‘Boys!’—‘Silence!’ exclaimed Mr. Grippem; ‘Silence!’ echoed the shadow,—‘my esteemed father, who has just left this room, has left it with mingled feelings of delight and happiness; and I, who know his large heart, know that, could he have trusted himself to say it, he would have said farewell,—may you all live content and happy for ever afterwards.’ ‘Amen,’ said Mr. Grippem. ‘Amen,’ echoed the shadow. ‘A-a-a-men,’ said a voice from the lower end of the room, in a mock gruff tone that caused a very general titter through the ranks. ‘Who's that?’ shouted Mr. Grippem. ‘Who's that?’ repeated the shadow. ‘He'll please remain after school,’ said the former. ‘Now then, boys, as Mr. Grippem calls over the names on this list, each boy will show his hat and come forward.’ Whereupon the usher took the list out of the junior Kearas' hand, and sang out ‘Aslem.’

‘Here,’ answered a husky voice, that told that the person responding had passed from adolescence; at the same time a hat was held up for exhibition, and then withdrawn.

‘Come forward, Aslem.’ A stout-made, middle-sized youth, with incipient whiskers and downy upper lip and forbidding countenance, advanced to the desk. ‘It's very gratifying, Master Aslem, to find your name always stands first on the list, and that no boy has yet been able to supersede you,’—a remarkable fact, and which he owed to the additional fact that his was the only name that came under the letter A. ‘I am happy to inform you that there is six and sixpence coming to you, being your quarter's allowance of sixpence a week, without any deduction.’

Mr. Kearas then counted out the amount stated from a heap of silver coin before him, with which, after a few more words of commendation, and an exchange of smiles, the envied youth

returned to his place. Almost every countenance testified that this lad was regarded in some peculiar manner. His allowance exceeded that of any other, of itself sufficient to enstamp him with a claim to superiority; but when coupled with the isolated fact that there never was any deduction made from his amount, nor were his parcels ever opened, no wonder there was an involuntary deference yielded by all, that further aided his acquired leadership in the school, which, being conceded him unquestioned, was most arbitrarily exercised.

'Brady!' shouted the usher.

'Here,' was the response, followed by the raising of the hat above the head.

'Come here! Twopence a week is two and thruppence a quarter. Sixpence for laces, and tuppence for slate-pencils and sundries, leaves a shilling, and there's a small parcel.'

Mr. Grippem handed the parcel that had been overlooked, but which, from a comparison of the bulk of its contents to the size of the box, had evidently been also subject to deductions. Brady retired. The next two or three names were passed over, as having no money to receive, for some special cause not vouchsafed to be explained by Mr. Kearas, junior. The remainder were called, with varying good fortune. Some had a few pence coming to them, others nothing, their amounts having been absorbed in mulcts. A few were even indebted to the firm, necessitating the balance being carried to the next quarter,—a reprehensible state of things that drew forth from Mr. Kearas some very sage and philosophical remarks, the especial tenor of which was the patience and resignation of the authorities, under such ungrateful return for their profuse expenditure and liberal treatment. Judging, however, from the attempted expostulation of one or two bolder lads, but who were immediately silenced, as well as from the example given in the case of Brady, his philosophy was on a par with his arithmetic, that taught him if he could not make fourteen out of six and three by ordinary calculation, it was consolatory to assume that it might have reached a higher figure had *sundries* been taken into account.

Before passing from this half-yearly parcel day, with which the quarterly exhibit had on this occasion been combined, it will be proper to notice the novel procedure alluded to in the show of hats. Although it was patent to everybody in and around Grumbleby, that not more than one-third of the boys belonging

thereto ever appeared out of doors even with a Bluecoat boy's apology for a hat, yet on exhibition days the required production of such an article was always, with rare exceptions, met. True, some were minus the brim, others the crown, whilst of another class a closer examination might have given rise to a question if it *had ever* been a hat,—not to mention the peculiarities of dimensions or shape that its use as an extemporized cushion had occasioned, so that, when fitted to the head, it resembled the portable courtly opera-hat distinguished by the name of *chapeau-bras*, under which latter member of the body they were generally worn, if worn at all. However, *malgré* their appearance, hats there were, and usually enough to crown the whole school; as there would have been had an equal number of bare-headed lads made their advent that morning amongst them for the first time. The secret or explanation of this anomaly was found in the received axiom, that all existing hats, or what answered to that name, were on such special occasions common property, and towards this accommodating view the aid of a new boy was an especial auxiliary, his castor, save the evidences of the bonneting it had already undergone, presenting the nearest similitude to the said article, and therefore, nilly-willy, they were passed along behind each boy for exhibition, as his name was called, until, reaching some rival, it was relieved from further duty, and was passed back to its rightful owner, somewhat the worse for its handling. The want of a hat was no trifle,—nothing less than a year's stoppages, in the case of most boys, would have replaced it; and as there was no compromise, that would have been bankruptcy. Such as got no allowance were settled with in canings and floggings, that almost invariably resulted in the production of the missing article on the next inspection.

The accounts of the scholastic branch of the establishment being thus squared for another term, the three dignitaries withdrew. And now commenced the most enjoyable task, the examination of the parcels, during which delightful employment the happy recipients were surrounded by the devouring eyes and watering mouths of their less fortunate school-fellows; and extra obnoxious, indeed, must such an one have been, who at that moment was not remembered by the more favoured boy. The owner of a knife, on the cutting edge of which, the borrower usually declared, 'you could ride all the way to Lunnun without being the worse for it,' was always repaid for its loan by

having it returned 'loaded.' One drawback, however, to the unalloyed enjoyment occasionally interposed, when some claimant stepped in, and insisted upon foreclosing a mortgage made to him of a certain proportion or interest in the contents of a parcel, the mortgagee having, Jacob-like, taken advantage of his brother Esau in a hungry moment during the half-year, to purchase such claim at a most disproportionate value.

A feature, so abnormal as to be worthy notice, of these halcyon days, continuing ordinarily for about a week, was the immunity from bullying enjoyed throughout the school even by the uncared-for, whilst the owner of a parcel or a few half-pence was actually received into special favour. Why, it was only yesterday that big Gubbins was kicking and cuffing young Colley because he did not look sharp with the hockey he was sent for, and that made Colley cry and mutter, when at a safe distance, 'Toe ho, you fool, you're always drubbing me!' and now Gubbins has his arm most lovingly around Colley's neck, walking and talking along the playground so amiably that young Colley is even digging him in the side, whilst Gubbins is laughing at him, and eventually runs off behind a tree in the rookery to escape a 'punching' that his junior is luxuriating in bestowing, the more enjoyable because of its novelty. Look at that group yonder; why, the millennium has arrived and taken Grumbleby Hall on its road. There, side by side on the grass, are affecting evidences of that longed-for epoch,—the wolf and the lamb are feeding together, and the leopard lying down with the kid; and mark how the incongruous elements are combining and intensifying, as that slice of cake is transferred from Colley's digits to Gubbin's gab, despite his feeble remonstrances 'that it's too much,' or as that other youngster is insisting on his late tyrant taking the lion's share of a small tart, which, his mouth full, the said lion is inarticulately declining, and would have continued to do so, but that the altercation necessarily terminated after he had swallowed down the lamb's share in addition to the lion's. And now, at the suggestion of the leopard, lions, wolves, lambs, and calves,—the latter very distinguishable from the rest,—jump up and adjourn to the refectory of Nannie Milner,—of whom more hereafter,—but which attractive rendezvous they found in possession of earlier arrivals, as it continued to be for several days subsequently, causing an exhaustive run on the meal and flour bags forming the stock-in-trade of that celebrated
'aurant, and affording almost incessant employment to the

old lady in the manufacture of crowdies, pancakes, and floury hasties.

But nothing lasts for ever ; so, like other similar predictions, it turned out that it was not the millennium after all, at least at Grumbleby, and the week had scarcely closed before a reaction set in, and this mart, like other large centres of commerce after a season of great prosperity, began to experience the effect of a decline in plum-cake and condiments, which, being rapidly followed by a tightness in the money market, as a sequence brought with it its usual and sure concomitants, stagnation, bankruptcy, altercations, recriminations, and the like, until matters relapsed into the state in which they existed before parcel day.

But, as has been intimated, there were speculators at Grumbleby, training for their position on 'Change,—the budding talent presaging the coming genius, whose shrewd financial operations in 'bulls' and 'bears,' or bold 'straddles,' or more daring 'puts' and 'calls,' were one day to startle and revolutionize, or scandalize, the Exchanges of his or other countries, culminating in the envied position of a millionaire. Luxuriating in the many delectables that were forced on their acceptance by boys who never gave a thought that their store could come to an end, or who in their exuberant generosity were only too glad to conciliate their rulers, these speculators had husbanded their own stock of cake and apples and other confectionery and fruit until the time of scarcity, that experience taught them would very quickly ensue, came round ; then, as it became noised about that there was still some in secret store, depredators at night prowled around, broke into boxes, or searched for caves, but, too wily for such, the more experienced bided their time until the market was depleted, and prices ruled high, when the announcement was made that these Rothschilds were prepared to receive tenders ; and as the demand always exceeded the supply, and great activity in competition took place, bargains were made at highly remunerative rates, but which, as it entailed a risk, so it caused the price to vary, and hence arose the claims made on parcel day, the great settling time for liquidations.

There was one other incident, that, as it belongs to the history of these days, and tends to give a further insight into the disposition of Miss Milly, the young lady whose interest in Willie and his earlier friends had brought on herself the not unusual displeasure of Mrs. Kearas, it will be well not to pass over

without noticing. Always after the distribution of the coveted packages, Milly appeared to have an unusual amount of business in the neighbourhood of the swill tub, or round by the ling stack,—to the former with a pail, which she carried there with the ostensible purpose of emptying the contents thereof into the tub, but, after looking cautiously round, set down on the other side thereof. Whilst at the stack, after fumbling about, she returned with a few sticks for the fire. At the conclusion of these performances, she generally stood half hidden inside the door of the passage before described, in the shade of which she could conceal herself until the object of her interest appeared, and who always seemed *en rapport* with Milly at these times. Upon making his appearance, she usually presented herself more conspicuously, and went through a semaphoric telegraphy that was readily apprehended, as testified to by a circuitous path to the pail, whence, making a dive behind the tub, something was clutched and buttoned up in his breast, and the boy speedily decamped into some place where he would be alone; whilst a second lad, at a signal from Milly, walked leisurely away to the stack to secure what had been placed in a hole in the wall for his benefit; having accomplished which little mysterious acts she disappeared, quite elated at her success.

Although very natural, it might not, unless further explained, appear very prudent, that a young lady should be on such seeming good terms with the young gentlemen of the Academy. It was quite natural and excusable, had Milly looked from behind a curtain inside a window, where the subject of her observation could not have discovered her; and had she been drawn thither to gratify a maidenly curiosity by a clandestine inspection of the handsome young gentlemen who promenaded within view, in their picturesque costumes,—very natural, especially when all communication or intercourse, except under supervision, was forbidden. And where is the young lady, and, it is feared, some older ones too, who could be proof to such temptation? But we must do Miss Milly justice: no such desire entered her strange noddle, nor did it prove a temptation; it would never have occurred to her; yet as this occurred oftener than on parcel days, and was confined to one or two boys, it was suspicious, and requires explanation.

It so happened that on the examination of the boxes, baskets, and other packages, on the day previous to their being distributed

to their owners, Mrs. Kearas was always assisted by the two young ladies, Ann and Milly, and thereby the latter had become familiar with the fact that one boy in particular, long resident at the school, and of course known to her, was never amongst the number of the elect, and thereupon her sympathy in his behalf was evoked, the more especially as on such occasion he never failed to be well abused by Mrs. Kearas, who always showed great hostility to the lad. Moved to pity, his case being a duplex of her own, as she carried the apronsful of mulcts, abstracted from the various parcels, to their depository in the cellar or cupboards, she always contrived to abstract therefrom an assortment for his especial benefit,—a proceeding that she justified to herself from the example set, and which, of course, so won upon the lad, that he came to regard her with an attachment that he entertained for none other, and that sought expression in any little service he could render her. This time she learned that another had fallen under a similar ban, and hence the second deposit, which, she had found means to make both aware, awaited them at the barrel and ling stack.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HERBERTS.

SEATED on a low stool of raised wool-work, at the first-floor window of a house in Bedford Square, London, half hidden by the drapery depending from a large gilt pole, was a sprightly-looking girl of about sixteen. On her lap lay a book, which, as she turned over its pages, seemed to be of an amusing character, judging from the frequent smiles that lighted up her face. Occasionally she raised her head and looked in the direction of a couch, wheeled obliquely towards the fire, which, though it was the month of June, the chilliness of the atmosphere rendered needful; for a yellow misty haze, the result of incessant rain during the night, was rising and creeping along the muddy streets. Now and again the mist rose sufficiently high to permit a view from the window of the enclosure in the centre of the square; the flowers and shrubs, weighted with the superincumbent moisture, were bent towards the ground, whilst the gathering drops fell from the trees on the dank grass below.

The room was spacious, and arranged in modern style; the furniture, though not new, was in excellent preservation, as though it had been but little used, and was of a costly description. Large mirrors extended almost from the ceiling to the floor, at one end of the room, and to the mantelpiece at the other. The panelled walls were hung with paintings in elegant deep gilt frames, and a few water-colour drawings and pencilled etchings, these latter the productions of the ladies of the establishment. Here and there a gilt bracket supported a bronzed bust or classic figure in ormolu. Various articles of *vertu* were distributed about the room and on the table. On the marble mantel, covered by an oval glass shade, was a green bronzed timepiece, the supports to which were two gilt lions. Two

handsome porcelain vases stood on each side the windows, out of which grew some new variety of exotics. The damask chairs, couches, and cushions, corresponding in colour with the crimson hangings, at present covered with lace curtains, were ranged about the room in a *négligé* manner upon the velvet carpet. The other rooms of the house were in keeping with this, and betokened the owner in easy, if not affluent circumstances; and yet withal, to a connoisseur, to whom the blending of colours, facile contrasts, and graceful unity were the ideal of taste, there would have appeared an inharmonious association, bespeaking an acquired rather than an innate appreciation of detail, not unusual to those who have travelled or resided for a short time abroad, and by whom much of the style simulated is intended to convey that idea, but fails, owing to the unconscious pervasion of stereotyped English predilections with the French or Italian modes.

'Hetty,' said a faint voice. The young lady at the window laid down her book on the stool, and went over to the couch. In rising she displayed a figure at once graceful and symmetrical, delicately fair skin, and exquisitely chiselled features, soft blue eyes, and lips around which smiles perpetually played; light hair hung in wavy curls over her pearl-white shoulders, contrasting favourably with a heavy red coral necklace; her dress, in the fashion of the day, displayed her small feet encased in bronzed sandalled shoes.

On approaching the couch, she dropped on her knees by the side of the speaker, who was reclining thereon, evidently in ill health. One glance was sufficient to identify her as an elder sister, in the full bloom of womanhood, about eight or ten years the senior of the younger. The resemblance was so striking, that nothing need be added to the portrait already sketched, other than that her features were, of course, more set, and her whole physique bore a more mature appearance; her hair was somewhat darker, and her cheeks and lips wanted the roseate tint; her eyes, however, sparkled with a deeper intelligence, whilst at the same time a shade of melancholy pervaded their general expression, contrasting strongly with her sprightly sister, over whose countenance sunshine smiled almost uninterruptedly. It being morning, as well as being in ill health, she was attired in *demi-toilette*.

'I think, Hetty, I will sit up for a short time; I am tired of lying down,' said the invalid. Whereupon the younger assisted

her to rise, and, leaning on the latter's arm, she walked slowly up and down the room, returning after a few minutes to the sofa, when Miss Harriet arranged the soft pillows at her back, and wheeled the couch over to the window, that she might look out on to the Square, accompanying her action with a few cheerful sallies. About reseating herself, she jumped up and placed the stool under her sister's feet, then took an orange from the mantelpiece, peeled it, and divided it into quarters, and depositing them in a plate, laid it by her side on the couch. Kissing her forehead, she returned to her book. As she turned over a fresh page, she cast a glance at her sister, and observing she had not touched the orange, rose and inquired if she would prefer a little of the jelly or other dainties that crowded a side-table, but which were declined for a glass of cold water.

Hetty reseated herself, but this time on the sofa by the side of her sister, and, drawing her head gently towards her, bid her rest it on her shoulder, and presently inquired if she felt better than she did when she rose in the morning.

'I think I do—a little,' said the elder, raising her head.

'Can I do anything for you?' and she rearranged the pillow, that had slid down.

'No, I thank you; I am quite comfortable. What are you reading?'

'*Le Malade Imaginaire.*'

The sister smiled, then remarked, 'I suppose you think I resemble Monsieur Argan?'

'O no, Bertie; but I think I make as awkward a nurse as Toinette, *mais pas si méchante.*'

The sister smiled, and said pleasantly, 'Now you are expecting a compliment. But perhaps you would read aloud?'

Miss Harriet immediately expressed 'how happy she would be to do so if she could endure her *mauvaise* pronunciation,' which drew forth another sly intimation that she was determined to have the compliment; whereupon the young lady declared that, were she not an invalid, she would resent such insinuations by not uttering another sentence for the next whole ten minutes, but even as it was, would punish her by inflicting her *patois* on her, and thereupon commenced reading, adapting her voice and manner to the interlocutory modes of the comedy in an easy and correct style, evidencing an acquaintance both with the language and inflections, and even with the idioms, in which Molière abounds.

As she proceeded, she entered so aptly into the idiosyncrasies of the characters, that, though followed by some slight sensation of pain, her sister could not repress an occasional laugh at her representation of the insolent drollery of Toinette, or at the readiness with which she changed her voice and manner to the irritable hypochondriac, or simulated the grotesqueness of the stupid Diafoirus the younger, whilst the artless Angélique and her lover and other *dramatis personæ* were not less characteristically personified.

Hetty had got nearly to the middle of the second act, at which she commenced, when, from the slightly increased sound of the breathing, she became aware that her sister, who had reclined her head during the reading on the arm of the couch, had dropped off to sleep, and, fearing to awaken her if she stopped, she went on in a monotone by way of continuing the somnific effect.

She had remained in this sleep, interrupted by nervous starts, for a short time, when a ring and double knock at the street door, presently succeeded by a footstep on the stairs, announced the approach of some person. Fearful of disturbing her sister, she stepped softly to the room door, and opened it gently, just as the surgeon, Dr. Scarr, had raised his hand to knock. Bestowing a smile of recognition, she raised her finger to her lips, and pointed to the couch. Closing the door, they walked softly over to the window.

The movement, however, awoke the sister, who, conscious that a third person was in the room, was about to raise her head, when the surgeon advanced and drew a chair in front of her, and, seating himself, commenced making inquiries as to her state. After an examination of pulse and tongue, he intimated that there was a slight improvement, which, if it continued, would permit of an early removal to the country, the air of which would be more beneficial than medicine.

After a few commonplaces, he rose and seated himself by Miss Harriet, and, observing the book she had been reading lying on the stool, he took it up, and, on looking at the title-page, smiled, and asked what she thought of Monsieur Purgon, *médecin*, and whether Diafoirus, his nephew, was not a sagacious youth, to which she replied that she thought they were types of real characters, and that facsimiles could be found in our own day and country; to which the surgeon laughingly assented, but at the same time expressed an opinion that the similitude might be

extended to patients, and that were there less Argans there would be fewer Purgons, for even practitioners of standing were at times compelled to humour the monomanias of their patients in order to gain their confidence. To this, however, the young lady demurred, deeming it incumbent on men placed in such responsible positions to rather exercise their talents in the endeavour to disabuse the minds of their patients than to humour their morbid fancies.

‘But,’ responded the surgeon, ‘in many such cases it would be a hopeless effort, and only result in the calling in of some less fastidious or even an unprincipled man, whose experience and necessities had taught him to profit by his patient’s disease,—for, after all, a disease it is.’

‘In that case,’ replied Miss Harriet, ‘being a disease, it of course renders it no longer unworthy medical skill to seek a cure. Although to me it appears rather of a mental than physical nature.’

‘Doubtless, doubtless,’ replied the surgeon, ‘resulting from an unhealthy action of the brain, superinduced by some derangement of the system, and which it should, of course, be the study of the physician to ascertain ; but as it may arise from involved causations more or less remote, originating in constitutional tendencies or otherwise, it becomes the more imperative that only those who have been in long attendance on the family should have the charge of such cases.’

‘But, Doctor,’ interposed the young lady,—who had intentionally shaped her conversation in the direction it had taken for a special object, and in which the surgeon had unconsciously aided her, more speedily and readily than she had anticipated,—‘have you any reason to suppose’—and she lowered her voice and looked out of the window as though calling his attention to something in the Square—‘that my sister’s illness arises from a mental cause?’

The wary surgeon instantly comprehended the drift of the young lady’s remarks, and glanced rapidly towards the sister, fearful she might have overheard the last few words ; her eyes met his, and the younger sister, who had observed the movement, experienced a momentary shock, as she fancied she detected an almost appealing glance from the patient at the surgeon.

‘In such case,’ he responded, opening his eyes to their full, and looking her steadily in the face, ‘I should consider you, Miss Harriet, who are her constant companion, would be better able to form a judgment than even her medical attendant.’

Although slightly discomposed by the surgeon's look, and the curtness of his response, the young lady would have pursued the subject, the more so, as she regarded the reply as an equivocation; but she became conscious that the sister was painfully endeavouring to apprehend their conversation. So, changing her voice to a louder key, she remarked, 'Then you think that a change of air will be beneficial?'

'Most undoubtedly, most undoubtedly,' responded the surgeon, glad to have their attention diverted from the course it had taken.

'And that Bertha will soon be strong enough to undergo the fatigue of a journey?'

'In another fortnight I consider she will be sufficiently strong to undertake it.' Then, approaching his patient, he added, 'Everything will depend upon your submitting to be kept quiet, and directing your thoughts to agreeable and pleasant subjects; but which, with Miss Harriet as your nurse, turning towards her, 'there will be no difficulty in your doing.

The young lady bowed an acknowledgment, and inquired if the same medicines were to be continued; whereupon he walked over to the side-table, and took up the last bottle sent. After a pause, he observed that she might discontinue its use, and he would replace it by a tonic; then took up his hat, bowed politely to the patient, and made for the door, preceded by Harriet, who handed him his silver-headed stick, and was about to step outside the door with the intention of reverting to her former conversation on the landing; but her eye caught that of her sister, watching her movements, whereupon she re-entered the door, and remained thereat only long enough to reply to the surgeon's inquiries after Mrs. Herbert's health, whom he pronounced imprudent to be out on so damp a morning, and, pulling the door after him, retired, whilst she returned to her sister's side. The flush that had suffused the invalid's pale cheek during the last few minutes did not escape the notice of Harriet; and as the latter smoothed her hair, and pressed her hot cheeks against her own, she became sensible that her sister was slightly agitated. Without affecting to notice it, she rearranged the pillows, then, placing her head thereon, retired to her seat at the window, opening the comedy at the place where she had left off; but as no leaves were turned over, and her countenance assumed a shade of seriousness unusual to her, it was apparent the book had no further attraction, and that her mind was busy in another direction, on other and less pleasurable thoughts, in which she was soon absorbed.

'*Che cosa avete, cara sorella mia?*' exclaimed a faint voice, with an effort at pleasantry, and which proceeded from Bertha, who, attracted by the prolonged silence, had raised her head, and had been gazing at her with varied feelings.

Aroused from her reverie, the younger rose from her seat, responding with a forced smile, '*Non ho niente, signorina mia,*' and was about to take a seat on the sofa, when the noise of a carriage driving up, and halting at the door, caused her to return to the window to look out, and she exclaimed, 'There's mamma!' and as she ascended the stairs, went to meet her at the door.

'How is Bertha?' said Mrs. Herbert, a tall, stout, richly-dressed, matronly woman, as she entered the room, breathing rather heavily from the effect of mounting the stairway. 'I hear the Doctor has called: what does he think of her to-day? Has he given any directions, and left word what description of food she might partake of?'

By this time she had arrived in front of her sick daughter, and was about to kiss her, when Miss Harriet suggested that, coming from the damp air, it might be injurious to go so near to her.

Coinciding in this remark, she retired to the bed-room to divest herself of her bonnet and sundries, and reappeared habited in black silk, made in the extreme of fashion, and a lace cap trimmed with a profusion of ribands and artificials; gold pendants hung from her ears, whilst a heavy gold chain, encircling her neck, on the outside of a frilled collar, was fastened to a watch in the band of her dress. Her complexion indicated that she had been a blonde, though the veins that formerly purpled through, now imparted a red tinge to her skin; her eyes were of a bluish colour; whilst her features, though broad, were regular. A certain stiffness, the result more of an affected dignity than any disposition to be repellent, was apparent in her movements and general bearing.

'And so Dr. Scarr thinks you are better?' said Mrs. Herbert, as she came round to her daughter's side. 'Oh, we'll soon have you well again. But why do you keep the room so dark, Hetty?' Going over to the window, she drew the blinds higher, and set the curtains more on one side. 'Let me put this pillow behind your back. You are as thoughtless as ever, Harriet.'

'O no, mamma, she's been very good and attentive,' said Bertha.

'Here, child,' said the bustling lady, 'here's your orange never

touched,—take some,' handing the plate wherewith her sister had already essayed to tempt her. 'Well, then, try one of these patties;' and thus, after going through the category of articles on the table, all of which were declined, their very mention creating a nausea, she drew a chair to the side of the invalid, and by way of diverting her, or, more correctly, relieving herself, commenced a relation of where she had been, who she had seen, and what she had done, all of which, however, seemed to interest herself more than her children. At length, having exhausted these topics, she rang the bell for the parcel, the result of the morning's shopping, brought from the carriage and left in the hall, and thereupon displayed her purchases, the major part whereof were made to gratify her daughters, of whom she was justly proud.

'Was the postman here?' remarked Mrs. Herbert, as she drew out her spectacle-case and took thence her gold-mounted glasses, and ran over the bill of parcels accompanying the goods spread on the table.

'No,' replied Harriet; 'I saw him pass and call on the other side, and am disappointed, for I fully expected a letter from Mademoiselle Dumont. She promised to write as soon as she received mine, which she must have done last week.'

'I was not alluding to that, but was under the impression that there would have been one from Vienna.' At the mention of this the elder daughter looked at her mother with an interest she had not shown during the preceding part of the conversation, whilst a slight flush tinged her cheeks. Then in a half-apologetic tone she interposed,—

'But you know, mamma, dear, the embassy is much engaged at present. Mr. Canning's views of the Holy Alliance are calling forth a great amount of diplomatic negotiation, the result of his bold policy, and which must occupy all their time.'

'But surely, child, that should not prevent our receiving a line from Mr. Grey.' At the mention of this name an uneasiness was apparent in the eldest daughter's countenance.

'Mamma,' said the younger, who had been quick to observe the effect on her sister, 'I think we won't worry ourselves unnecessarily; we shall hear in good time,—indeed, the first opportunity, I have no doubt.'

'And that is almost daily,' continued Mrs. Herbert, who, engrossed with her own thoughts in the matter, had not entered into the feelings of her daughters.

'Mamma,' interposed Miss Harriet, with an appealing look, 'the Doctor ordered that Bertie should be kept quiet.'

'Bless me, child, don't I know that as well as the Doctor, and for that reason have given orders that no callers are to be allowed to see her.'

'But I think, mamma, other things than visitors may disturb a person that is unwell,—allusions to unpleasant topics, or any subject that would tend to excite the mind.'

'Certainly,' exclaimed Mrs. Herbert in a rather petulant tone, at this presumed dictation, 'certainly; and that is why I have been careful not to repeat anything I have heard on the subject, not even remotely alluding to such. Had it been otherwise, I should at once have informed you of something I learned from the Howards, on whom I called this morning.'

'Who wants to know what that old gossip says? What a pretty violet shade this ribbon is,—is it not, Bertie?' exclaimed Hetty, persistently endeavouring to turn the conversation, as she brought the article alluded to from amongst the contents of the parcel lying on the table to her sister for her inspection. As this immediately attracted the attention of the elder, who was gratified by this expression of interest in her morning shopping, it would in all probability have partially, if not wholly, answered the end, but that the sister, interested in her mother's last words, with some vivacity inquired 'what Mrs. Howard had informed her?'

'Oh, well, Harriet is so very prudent; perhaps it would be wise to consult her before I venture to repeat it.'

'Mamma,' remonstrated Harriet, slightly disconcerted at this rebuke, 'I only repeated what the Doctor counselled.'

'Which was scarcely necessary to one so conversant with the duties of a sick-room, and in which I quite agree. But, at the same time, I consider it does more harm than good to withhold the knowledge of those events in which the mind or heart is most interested, and the relation of which may very possibly allay a thousand anxious disquieting thoughts that are more distressing than the reality. That at least is my opinion, if I am at liberty to express one.' This laboured expression of her sentiments was uttered with some tartness by Mrs. Herbert, partly moved thereto by the little vexation she had experienced whilst her friend, Mrs. Howard, imparted, with some degree of acrimony, the information she was now no less desirous to communicate to her daughters, and which was not abated by the effort of the younger to prevent. Mrs. Herbert was at all times intolerant of contradiction, conse-

quently, though an indulgent mother, her will usually prevailed, even during the life of her easy-going husband ; and as she generally formed her conclusions from her own views, she often decided without that regard to the opinion of others that would have modified her decisions. Once impressed with the desirability of an object that she conceived for the interest of her family, whom it was her ambition to elevate, no minor considerations were allowed to deter her from its attainment.

Though ostentatious she was not proud,—she was too vain for that, which latter was her besetting sin ; her plebeian origin worried her, and the one prevalent desire was to raise her children above the sphere to which they socially belonged, and in which, favoured as they were by fortune, they might have enjoyed more of happiness and comfort than, in consequence, had fallen to their lot. This weakness was too prominent in her intercourse with the world not to be recognised ; as a result, it drew upon her the malicious sneers and opposition of those whose acquaintance she slighted, as well as those whom she so assiduously courted ; but, fertile in resources, she was able to accomplish much towards her object, and overcome difficulties that would have disconcerted less sensitive or persevering mothers, or one whose incentive was solely her own aggrandisement.

As, however, the relation of the Herberts to a story thus far advanced necessitates a retrospect of their past history, further reference thereto is deferred to the next chapter.

At the conclusion of her very pronounced opinion, the younger daughter, knowing from experience it would only aggravate to contend further, remained silent ; whereupon Mrs. Herbert, still addressing herself to her, resumed, ‘ Then, exercising my maturer judgment as to the happiest mode of dissipating needless quietude, and thereby aiding to establish a state of repose that your sister’s agitated mind stands in so much need of, I was about to inform you, Bertha,’ turning to her as she spoke, ‘ that just as I descended from the carriage in St. James’ Street, and was about to enter the French milliner’s, who should I meet coming out at the door but Mrs. Howard and her daughter, who immediately returned with me to the shop, and informed me she was only thinking of me a few moments before leaving her house, having that morning heard from Lady Frances that her brother, who is attached to the embassy at Vienna, had written her that the Honourable Aubrey Grey was about being transferred to the Spanish diplomatic staff.’

At this point, struggling to compose herself, the face of the invalid lit up, and, interrupting her mother, she inquired with eagerness, 'That will necessitate his return to England for his credentials or instructions, will it not?'

Without noticing the effect of her intelligence on her daughter, she replied, 'Mrs. Howard could not inform me, dear, on that point, but promised to ask Lady Frances, and drop me a line with her reply.'

An uneasy, unsatisfied expression rested on the daughter's countenance, as she further inquired 'when she would be likely to see Lady Frances?'

'In a day or two,' returned Mrs. Herbert. 'However, Mrs. Howard more than once, in a tone and manner not altogether agreeable, expressed her surprise that we had not received the information from Grey himself.'

Miss Bertha leaned back on the sofa, whence she had during the conversation partially raised her reclined body, and relapsed into a thoughtful state.

Whilst this discourse was taking place, Miss Harriet had tried to overcome her own vexation at what she deemed—using the mildest term—a very thoughtless proceeding on the part of her mamma, and with this object had tossed through the contents of the parcel, the result of the morning shopping, until, attracted by a stylish blond lace cap, intended for the elderly lady's wear, she had taken it over to the other end of the room, and was busied at the mirror in trying it on her own head. She had just arranged it to her satisfaction, when she caught the last sentence, impugning the deportment of Mrs. Howard whilst assuming surprise at Grey's silence. As the conversation appeared to have ceased, she turned round, and, affecting Mrs. Howard's tone and manner, and drawing up her features into a serio-comic shape, she startled her mamma, who was at the moment ransacking her brain for anything further that might have passed between herself and the lady in question, by exclaiming, 'Well, now, you do surprise me! I've no doubt he intended; but then, you know, Mrs. Herbert, these men in the *higher* circles—ah me!' Unfortunately, to correspond with the sentiment of these last monosyllables, it was necessary to shake her head, and in doing so off toppled the artistic head-dress, and in her endeavour to save it, it was crushed between her hands.

'There, now, see what you have done!' exclaimed the excited Mrs. Herbert; 'a head-dress that I was so particular in

giving directions to be made in the latest style; look at it. Now, Miss, is that the conduct becoming a young lady upon whose education so much has been lavished? Making a merry-andrew of yourself, just as though you had been brought up for a columbine at Astley's! How ladylike! how befitting a Herbert!—the manners and littleness of a theatrical mimic, for which you appear to be specially qualifying yourself!

During the former part of this harangue the young lady had been so astounded at her mishap, that she had stood transfixed to the spot, afraid to examine the ill-used cap, which she still held between her hands, but the sting contained in the last sentence or two recalled her to herself, and the colour returned to her dimpled cheeks. Thereupon she advanced to the table, and deposited the spoiled *coiffure* amongst the other articles, and, looking over at Mrs. Herbert, whose face still retained the sarcastic air with which she had uttered the concluding words, in a half-deprecatory and half-saucy tone exclaimed, 'A columbine!' Then, putting herself into what she conceived to be the attitude of the *figurante* to whom she had been likened, her arms akimbo, she balanced herself on one foot, and twirled herself round two or three times in so graceful a manner, that it might have won her the plaudits of a more appreciative audience. In performing the histrionic movement she reached the door, opened it, and curtsied almost to the ground, and, drawing herself up with dignity, exclaimed again, 'A columbine!' closed the door, and retired to her room to give vent to a flood of tears, not so much occasioned by the severe censure uttered under momentary provocation, as from a sense of oppression at the thoughtless garrulity of her parent, that must rather have aggravated than soothed her sick sister's mental ailment; for she knew full well how keenly the intelligence would affect her, and tend to counteract an improvement she had flattered herself she observed, and that had been confirmed by her medical attendant. Devotedly attached to her sister, her happiness was interwoven with hers, and, though totally unlike in disposition, each was equally ardent in her affections; but in the elder there was that higher order of intellectual grace, that operated as a charm over the less gifted but not less accomplished and much younger sister.

Mrs. Herbert had not deigned to turn towards her provoking daughter during her mock performance; nevertheless she had been witness thereto, as reflected in the glass over the mantel-piece, towards which her face was turned. Petrified by a

behaviour that to her stately mode of thinking was so repugnant to the manners of a lady, it was some minutes before she regained her composure; when she did, she was about to break forth into a strong tirade, but a glance at the pale countenance of Bertha restrained her. It was painfully evident that already the morning's excitement had been too much for her. Handing her a glass of water, she commenced fanning her feverish face, and during the operation her vexation had time to subside, or rather to give place to anxiety for her sick child.

As feared by Harriet, the communication of the incautious mother operated for some days injuriously upon the invalid, an increase of fever and debility being the result, but which the untiring devotion of the artless Harriet left no means untried to arrest, by endeavouring to divert her thoughts to lighter and pleasanter subjects, tenderly watching her, lest in her abstractions her mind should be pursuing the same too-engrossing idea, at such times playfully rallying her on her sober seriousness, and essaying, with girlish enthusiasm, to paint everything in its brightest colours. Bertha was not insensible to these efforts, and, deeply appreciating the self-denial that her loving sister imposed on herself, did her best to reciprocate her efforts by as much as possible responding thereto, which was not without a salutary effect in once more restoring her to the state in which the surgeon had left her on his visit.

More than once during these few days of relapse, Bertha, watching a favourable opportunity when alone with Harriet, would have recurred to the intelligence that had arrested her improvement, but, divining her intention before it was expressed, the latter always adroitly contrived to introduce some other subject to divert her therefrom, the more imperative as nothing further had been heard from Mrs. Howard or any other person relative to the correctness of the statement.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HERBERTS.

MR. Sydney Herbert (by which full designation his wife always spoke of him to her friends, under the impression that it had an aristocratic sound) was an Englishman of the real type. His figure was stout and muscular, and his features, though large, were regular and handsome. Of a jocund, generous disposition, his open, manly bearing inspired respect and confidence. A member of the family of a respectable yeoman residing in the country, he had been placed by his father in a mercantile firm in London, in which he eventually became a partner, and soon after married the lady to whom, whilst yet a boy living in the country, he had become attached, and who was of an equally respectable parentage, the family being of some consideration in their neighbourhood. An ever-increasing and prosperous business, whilst it gave him the command of ample means to gratify his wife's ruling passion, left him but little leisure to enter into her plans for social aggrandizement. Inclination as well as special aptitude for commercial pursuits, led him to devote his talents and time to the one, almost to the exclusion of the other. Not that Mr. Herbert was a money-grub, or could not enjoy the amenities of life, but his social qualities were rather of the domestic order, than such as fitted him to shine in the round of artificial life. Brought daily into contact with men of strong mental calibre, and not unfrequently of culture and influence, politically as well as commercially, the worthy merchant was not wanting in intellectual keenness, nor in urbanity or suavity of manner, the latter the more attractive and impressive, from the reality apparent in their hearty frankness; but these concurring influences operated upon his naturally robust mind, to raise him above the puerilities that are the ordinary concomitants of men of *ton*, and disqualified him for any participation therein.

When, therefore, the matter-of-fact Mr. Herbert returned from his counting-house in the city, tired, and at times exhausted, by the study of prices current, the intricacies of trade, exchanges, and other congenial subjects, to him nothing was so cosy or enjoyable as a bright, cheery home, at which, around a glowing fire (if in winter), in slippers and easy wrapper, he could recline in his arm-chair, and, after their evening meal, have his joke and his laugh with his wife and his girls, or listen to their enlivening chatter, or permit himself to be read to sleep by one or the other; occasionally relieved by the presence of an old friend from the country, or some foreign correspondent of the firm.

But though a worthy, sensible man, and withal affectionate and indulgent both to wife and children, these predominant characteristics of her husband in Mrs. Herbert's estimation savoured too much of the commoner, and were in consequence the cause of much expostulation and effort to induce him to shake himself out of; but as such an achievement would have necessitated a shock of sufficient power to have transformed him into a new man, her battery, well charged as it was with censure and reproach, was unequal to the task. Contenting himself, therefore, with recording his dissent from her views, he only very rarely remonstrated on occasion of their excessive display; but as Mrs. Herbert, as already intimated, dominated the house, he was further content to purchase an exemption from participation therein, at the cost of a liberal allowance.

The conduct and management of family matters being thus left solely to Mrs. Herbert, whose aspirations rose in proportion to the means she found at her command, she set herself to work, with a determination to qualify her daughters for the position she emulated. Early in life she surrounded them with elegancies and superfluities, and committed their training to professionals, whose acquaintance with the forms and tone of the *élite* pointed them out as eligible instructors. Nature, too, seemed on her side, for as the budding graces of the two lovely girls expanded, they still more encouraged and stimulated her to persevere in her design, satisfied that in person, as well as in what culture could do for them, they were calculated for the position her morbid cravings assigned them.

Miss Harriet, the junior of her sister by ten years, had only recently returned from Paris, where she had been resident the last two years at the most select boarding-school that

could be found, in order to perfect her in the language, and to give her that *distingué* elasticity of manner that was of more import in the estimation of her mamma than any mental attainments.

Whatever progress she might have made in the acquisition of knowledge, and which was not inconsiderable, her mental powers being above mediocrity, it was but too evident she had not benefited to the anticipated extent in the direction most desired. She was too ingenuous, too perfectly fashioned in nature's mould, to be capable of receiving much extra polish from art. Her animal spirits, too, were so mercurial, that they rendered her impatient of control. During her two years' sojourn at the *pension*, the irrepressible *Anglaise* had become the terror of the preceptress and her assistants, always doing just what she should not, and always meeting the charge with so much of artless candour as to disarm severity. One night, for instance, a commotion in an adjoining room would rally such of the girls as had not yet got *into* their beds, to the assistance of a bewildered damsel who had vainly endeavoured, the last ten minutes, to find her way between clothes that had got inextricably entangled. Suddenly light dawns upon the puzzled bevy, and, rushing to her bedside, the suspected author of the difficulty is captured, and dragged from her simulated sleep into the room, and amid fun and merriment Miss Herbert is compelled to untie the Gordian knot. Scarcely had this act ceased to be laughed over, when, a few mornings after, a scream and a race down-stairs by another scholar, caused a crowd to gather around the frightened girl, who announced that some dreadful monster was in the top drawer of her bureau. Armed with poker, tongs, and shovels, or whatever came to hand, and in the wake of Madame Dumont and company, the alarmed household cautiously ascended to the dread spot, and, after several advances and retreats, made a general attack on the said drawer, to the detriment of beautiful lawns and laces, jaconets, and other articles of the same *fabrique*; whereupon the savage beast, that turned out to be a wee mouse, vaulted out of the drawer, and set the whole squad to flight, resulting in bruised heads and limbs and torn dresses. Of course no one but Miss Harriet could have been guilty of such an outrage. And thus, whilst quite popular amongst the English girls, and emulated by the ardent though more stringently guarded French scholars, it will not be a matter of surprise that the hour of her departure was hailed with grateful thanksgiving.

by the scandalized Madame Dumont, who on the occasion proclaimed a *fête* day to the school.

If, with all the restraints of an academy under as strict surveillance as that exercised at a convent, Miss Harriet Herbert had not been subdued, it was no marvel that she should occasionally exhibit under her own roof such occasional proofs thereof as shocked her dignified parent. Unable to act a part, she ever and anon gave way to the exuberance of her spirits, and of course drew on herself such reproof as related in the foregoing chapter. She was just such an one as to make a dull house charmingly pleasant,—a dignified one very uncomfortable. Even her indulgent sister would at times counsel her on her brusque manners with acquaintances, and her too great freedom with domestics and inferiors, towards whom, she suggested, she failed to discriminate between familiarity and civility. In the disposition of the two, however, there always had existed a complete contrast. Whilst Harriet in many points resembled her frank, vivacious father, Bertha was constitutionally sensitive, and of too courtly a temperament to condescend to the youthful sallies of the more volatile sister. Whether from a fancied resemblance in this respect to her own predominant moral qualities, or her maturer age, or other cause, certain it is the mother's heart was attracted most to the elder, whom she idolized (as indeed did the younger), and of whom she usually spoke to her friends in language approaching the apotheosis. No expense or pains had been spared in obtaining for her all the advantages of a foreign education, both in Italy and France, and which had issued in a more satisfactory result than in the case of the younger daughter, due probably to an innate appreciation of the elegancies and refinements of art; and thus, though not come of gentle blood, both nature and education enstamped their impress, and combined to render her, in manners, carriage, and figure, the equal of the high-born ladies amongst whom it was intended she should move. Her affable, graceful manners and handsome features, united to a sweet temper and quick understanding, were powerful aids towards overcoming obstacles, and attaining the end sought by the proud mother, who saw with delight the perfect ideal of her cherished hopes in the beautiful daughter she was sacrificing at the shrine of her inordinate ambition.

On the completion of her education, she had remained at Paris, the guest of the family of one of her school-fellows.

As they were members of the higher circles, and moved in fashionable society, by a fortuitous opportunity she was thus at once introduced thereto; and it was not long before she gained an *entrée* into the most *recherchés salons*. Mrs. Herbert, who had gone to Paris to remain for the season, prior to bringing home her daughter, saw with unbounded gratification the design and dreams of years thus culminating without any effort on her part.

Inducted into the mysteries of the *beau monde*, Miss Herbert drank copiously at the fountain, gushing with intoxicating jets of fascination, too strong often for the cooler temperament of *habitués*, but much more dangerous in their influence on the ardent soul of an unsophisticated girl. It was whilst thus whirled along the brilliant sensuous eddies, that increased at every taste the craving for its continued excitation, that, amongst other admirers, she attracted the attention, and eventually won the heart, of Aubrey Grey, a collateral scion of a patrician English family, on whom already more than one mother, of more valid pretensions, had formed designs in relation to their own daughters. Mrs. Herbert's cup was now full; whilst this early attachment, by concentrating the attention of her daughter upon its object, acted with a conservative effect on the better, truer instincts of Bertha's nature, before they had become steeped too deeply in the mephitic stream.

But as the season passed, it was incumbent on Mrs. Herbert to return to the duties of her less attractive English home, and with much reluctance, and less inclination than heretofore, to cater to the domesticity of her unsympathetic husband. How this was to be accomplished with any degree of resignation was an enigma. Permitted to plunge with her idolized daughter into scenes contrasting so strikingly with his tame, insipid mode of living at Bedford Square, the thought seemed intolerable, and was only modified by a sense of duty to her younger child, then about six years of age.

But although delayed to the last moment, the time for their departure came, and with it that which compensated for their loss, for the same packet that bore Mrs. Herbert and her daughter across the Channel, also conveyed Mr. Grey, too captivated and too early in his novitiate to endure a separation not required by actual necessity.

The embarrassment now, however, in this unpremeditated proceeding on the part of the lover, was the difficulty of enter-

taining their distinguished friend in a style and manner such as he had been accustomed to, and that would correspond in some degree, as they considered, to what he would expect. They had not the same class to select from, and then there was the mortification that would ensue from those acquaintance, especially of Mr. Herbert, who on their return would consider it their duty to wait on them, and in many inopportune ways force themselves on their attention. There appeared only one alternative to the ill-balanced mind of the lady, and she began where others as weak had led the way,—she became as scarce to old friends as though yet in France, and was not at home to such as hastened to congratulate them on their safe arrival. As a consequence, they were soon left with hardly an acquaintance, and the one or two who were permitted to consider themselves such, were early made sensible of the honour conferred by the condescending *parvenue*, who on such—indeed, all—occasions now simulated the phraseology and manners of the *élite*, much to their edification.

At first this objectionable proceeding, as well as the complete alteration in the furnishing, style, and whole economy of the house, called forth repeated and strong remonstrances and protestations on the part of the amazed husband, whose veneration for ancient articles caused him to witness with dismay the stowing away of many such in inaccessible or unknown depositories, and even to complain that his old capacious haircloth chair had given place to so elaborate an article that he was really afraid to sit in it, whilst his nice easy old slippers, turned down at the heels, into which he could slide his feet without bending, had been replaced by a beautifully-worked pair of shoes (for he would never consent to term them by the name of the discarded slippers), that were so stiff at the heels that he was compelled to stoop, or raise his foot, and use no small exertion to coax them on. But as such representations only tended to recriminations, and to bring on himself reflections as to his ungenteel ideas and manners, he gradually yielded, but by way of compensation entered more energetically than ever into his mercantile occupations; and as his transactions continued to be productive and brought handsome margins, thereby enabling him to meet the increased extravagance of his wife, he ceased to interfere, contenting himself by an earlier and later stay at the counting-house; at times passing an evening with some friend at the club, or, whilst at home, solacing himself in the endearments of his little daughter, to whom he was as fondly attached as was the artless child to himself.

But whilst Mrs. Herbert was thus metamorphosing the interior of her dwelling, it was not so easy to supply the place of the discarded friends,—at least with such as she now affected; in which, untiring and indefatigable as she was, she only partially succeeded. Her failure, however, was attributed to her husband, of whom she had a sufficiently high estimate to know that, had he the inclination, he might in this respect have been of essential service, brought, as he often was, in contact with men of influence and standing; but no appeal or vituperation could move him. Too happy to escape the ordeal which in such case would have been exacted, and whereby he would have blundered in forgetting to designate the sideboard a *buffet*, or the blinds *jalousies*, the closet a *cabinet*, or the footman a *valet*, with other equally un-English nomenclature, he was inflexible.

Less sympathy existed at this time than now between the patrician and the commoner, that is, in the more intimate relations. Society, warned by occasional signs, was endeavouring still to maintain those guards by which it surrounds itself, and by which class seeks to entrench itself against class. But, borne down by advancing intelligence, those barriers are now being lowered, and the entrenchments partially filled or bridged over, as testified to in one mode, by the opening of the profession of arms and of civil employ, and even higher positions, to the educated of every grade. Along the avenues, whether of power or rank, there is advancing slowly but surely a growing hostility to assumption founded only on fortuitous warrant of birth or fortune, and which claims that worth and demonstrated intelligence take their place in the ranks and amongst the leaders of society. There could be no other result of the great educational era in which we live, and which, when taking into account the enormity of the yearly incomes and increasing territorial aggrandizement of individuals, is the great safeguard against any arrogations similar to those arising out of the feudal system, under which the tenants of the soil became the vassals of the powerful landowner, or wealthier manorial chief. Education, the lever, will also be the foil. But as thus we predicate, is there not, on the other hand, an equal cause for serious consideration, if not alarm? Whilst the intellectual elevation of our race is taking place (and we subscribe to its importance), it cannot escape us that knowledge is powerful for evil as well as good, and education of itself, standing alone, will only hand us over from one form of tyranny to another,—only render its subject a

wiser, subtler, more able villain, that's all,—not more virtuous, nor one whit healthier in moral status ; it possesses no element of that nature or tendency. Religion 'pure and undefiled' must permeate the diffused intelligence. The learned as well as the less educated need this conserving salt, to save from repeating in our own day the excesses, the debasing crimes, of those nations who, in their monuments of learning and genius, splendid even in ruins, unsurpassed in marvellous forms of beauty and sublimity, have in those very works of perfection emblazoned their own shame, and transmitted to posterity the silent exponents of the sad truth that men may become enlightened brutes and cultured demons. Their higher culture brought with it excesses that consumed by their intensity, and from which their unsanctified wisdom could not preserve them. No experience and no age will change this normal aberration : it is radical, as testified to in our day by the occasional, nay frequent, bold theories of men of great intellectual capacity, which, whilst they may at first only startle, have a subtle power, the tendency whereof is to descend to and upheave the lower strata. Then there are the continued assaults upon virtue by the host of the less gifted, and the rôle of fraud and crime that education has now made facile to that portion of the community, against whose complicity therein ignorance formerly protected their fellow-beings.

Mr. Aubrey Grey at this period was a young man of about two-and-twenty, tall and slightly built, with an intellectual forehead and imposing head, dark hair and complexion, and piercing black eyes, arched brows, slightly aquiline nose, and thin, compressed lips, about which an expression played, imparting at times an appearance of firmness, at others relaxing into pleasantry. His bearing, whilst easy, was dignified ; his temperament, though warm, was under control ; a consciousness of manner characterized his intercourse with strangers, with whom he was ordinarily reserved and taciturn. He had, at the expiration of his collegiate course, set out on his travels on the Continent, and it was at the termination thereof that at the *salons* of Paris he became acquainted with and enamoured of Miss Herbert.

In him the young *debutante* saw all that her ardent nature had pictured, and one in whom her highest conception of what is lofty and noble was embodied. Intense in her affections, she loved with a devotion that rendered her the slave of their object,

and which, untempered by the judgment, too often entails on its subject a chequered experience; dangerous where the being on whom it is concentrated is not imbued with the chastest, purest impulse. Seldom under the control of reason, or the result of calm conclusions or convictions of the intrinsic worth of the object, the choice is made under the influence of a heated imagination, and in such cases becomes unduly exaggerated. 'Love,' said the gifted Bulwer, 'proportioned, adorns the humblest existence, but disproportioned, defaces the fairest.'

As time passed on, it was expedient that Mr. Grey should enter upon the activities of life, and, having no predilection for the professions, interest succeeded in obtaining him an appointment on the embassy at Paris, a position for which he soon showed himself peculiarly adapted. After the strongest protestations of fealty to each other, and the usual grouping of a number of happy coincidences that were to take place in rendering their separation less intolerable, but which never happened, the sadness of a first parting took place. Once only had the opportunity for any lengthened renewal of their personal intercourse since occurred, which took place a few months subsequently, on the invitation of her former Parisian friend to again spend a short time with her, and of which she availed herself. During this period the two lovers were constantly together.

One serious drawback to their engagement was not made known until some time after it had taken place, when it transpired that there were special reasons why it should—at least for the present—be concealed from his friends, who, in addition to their objection to his entering on any matrimonial engagement for some years, had formed the design of obtaining for him an alliance with a member of an aristocratic family, distantly connected, who entertained the same views, and had taken measures to bring the parties into one another's society as frequently as possible. It was further understood that, on all taking place as arranged, a wealthy dowager aunt, with whom he had been a great favourite, and with whom, subsequently to the demise of his mother, he had resided, intended making him her heir. The idea, therefore, of any other possibility was never entertained, nor did it ever enter into their conceptions that one so favourably circumstanced could ever form such a *mésalliance* as the espousal of the daughter of a City merchant.

On Mr. Grey's position being made known to the family, the displeasure and mortification of Mrs. Herbert may be conceived.

She thus saw her hope of aggrandizement indefinitely postponed. For some days subsequent she had resolved to do what prudence seemed to demand,—to insist that his visits should either be discontinued altogether, or at least until they could be made other than clandestinely, which latter was evidently dependent on contingencies that might be remote. Eventually, however, upon representations that appeared plausible, in which he was sustained by his affianced, the continuance of their *liaison* was permitted. At one time the health of his aunt was failing; at another, his prospects of early independence of the interest and control of his relatives, held out a hope of his being able *soon* to throw off the shackles, and openly acknowledge his engagement. But throughout the disappointment, and these disturbing occurrences, the heart of Miss Herbert remained unalterably true, and her confidence unchanged, unless in its intensity, which seemed to increase in proportion to opposition or difficulty.

After the lapse of two years, Mr. Grey had been transferred to Berlin, and on a vacancy to a higher position, thence again to Vienna, where he was residing at the opening of this story. But a larger intercourse with the world was working a change. His natural force of character had impelled him to a closer attention to the duties of his office than it usually required of men of his age, surrounded by the blandishments and gaities of courtly life; and it was not long before his penetration enabled him to form and give opinions that obtained in return a degree of confidence, that encouraged him still further to concentrate his metaphysical mind upon congenial pursuits, until he became abstracted in the tortuosities of diplomacy and its subtleties of language. Although advantageous to him in the sphere in which he hoped to gain distinction, it was not beneficial to his moral nature. His eyes were opened to discern between good and evil; and the contrast between the world as it seemed under the haze of youth, and as it now appeared,—of human nature in its embossed velvet, its morocco gilt binding, and human nature as read on the open page,—gave birth to colder, more speculative thoughts and views. He saw too vividly its hollow artifices, its brilliant cheats,—the rôle genius against genius, and a struggle for the mastery. And all this was working a revolution in his soul. Official routine was now, for higher considerations, merged into keen study and hard work, and thus gradually vaulting ambition lured him on; an *attaché* now, unwearied diligence and continued application must be

followed by advancement, until eventually he would mount the pinnacle.

Stimulated by such considerations, he threw himself into his occupation with a zeal that at length changed the romantic into the chill realistic, perceptible even in his correspondence with her who at one time disputed successfully all other rivals to the first place in his mind and heart. His letters were now shorter, and written with greater precision, the language more artificial and less demonstrative; but this was attributed by Miss Herbert to the natural result of his employment, and it was long before that trustful heart had its misgivings, but which were no sooner admitted than dismissed. Again she dreamed on, until, startled from her Elysian dream, doubts arose, soon to be followed by fears, and a chilling possibility crept over that passionate nature, confirmed at length on the occasion of a hasty visit to England, when, entrusted with important confidential despatches, an interview of a short hour revealed to her something of the reality. The less fervent salute, the deferential air, the unimpassioned tones and stately bearing, on that evening worked the work of years, and though they separated with renewed protestations of fidelity, the sunshine had gone down on both, but the darkest cloud had settled over Bertha, blighting health and spirits.

Between the interval of this event and the present, about eighteen months, Mr. Herbert had died; but though he had left sufficient means to enable the family to maintain the same style of living, the circumstance of his death, combined with the failure of the elder daughter's health, conducted very materially to an altered state of things, compelling a retirement from those rounds of pleasure that the elder lady had continued to delight in. But, whilst thus seriously interfered with in her calculations, she was by no means discouraged, nor was her ambition extinguished; it only smouldered, ready at the appropriate time to burst out in greater strength now that all depended on herself, and there was not the same obstacle in her immovable husband. Her second daughter had arrived at an age when she should be provided for, and as soon as the elder's health permitted she would set to work toward that end. Of the ostensible cause of Bertha's decline in health she was ignorant, and attributed it to every cause but the true one; but under the treatment of the surgeon she confidently looked forward to her early recovery. With such feelings, already she had been guilty of some

extravagances which had not escaped the plebeian friends who still refused to be shaken off, and who, chagrined at her indifference, were not slow to magnify her weakness.

She had rather unusually early—at least with persons as far advanced in life as herself—laid aside her widow's weeds, and this occasioned her slighted acquaintance to surmise and speculate as to the cause, which, in conjunction with her gayer disposition, pointed in the direction of a very probable desire of filling up the vacancy. However, if such an idea had entered into the calculations of Mrs. Herbert, no proof of it had thus far been given within-doors, her time and thoughts being too much occupied in the settlement of her husband's affairs, and in her projected plans for the future of her daughters, which latter was the real cause of any erratic conduct on her part.

Miss Herbert, since the interview with Aubrey Grey, had struggled heroically with her feelings to maintain at least an outward semblance of her former self, upheld by the strength of her unyielding love; but the worm had only the more surely, though slowly, been gnawing into the interior of the flower, until at length, compelled to succumb, the insidious work was now manifesting itself on the outward form of the lovely corolla, and although not imagined by the worldly parent to arise from any other than ordinary causes, even she could not but marvel at the change produced in so short a time. The proud, sanguine spirit, that in its unhesitating confidence had surrendered all its being for the smile, for the love of that one enshrined in her heart, had snapped, and the recoil had shaken the earthly house. 'Every heart knoweth its own bitterness;' and the bitterness of that heart was in the thought that, if the love she once so fully possessed were lost, with it went all that made life beautiful or valuable.

CHAPTER XXV.

‘BRING ZENAS THE LAWYER.’

AS the surgeon became daily more embarrassed in pecuniary matters, the look-out was by no means a pleasant one; but whilst, with a little extra tact, he avoided or weakened the pressure from without, it was otherwise with that which operated from within, and from which there was no escape. Mrs. Scarr was clamorous and persistent, and her continued exactions could only be met by further depletion.

Although not so aspiring or select in the choice of her friends as Mrs. Herbert, she was equally fond of society, and was in ecstasies when, in response to her repeated invitations, Captain Lejette, with one or two *soi-disant* brother-officers, became a frequent guest at the table, and to meet whom some medical or legal professionals, with their wives, including the Hawkes, were usually invited. As these entertainments, apart from the extravagance in which she indulged on these occasions, entailed the additional expense consequent on accepting invitations in return from the latter class of friends, her husband more than once ventured, in guarded language, to propose an abridgment in their number and a curtailment of their profusion, hinting at the probable result of a further continuance thereof. But as Mrs. Scarr had become too fascinated with the society of the sons of Mars to be easily persuaded into such a course, she only treated his suggestions with indifference, and continued on every opportunity to excite the envy of such friends as were not included in the number of the select, by expatiating on the charming evenings enjoyed in the company of her military acquaintance.

It was during one such rhapsody, on the morning succeeding an evening party, that the surgeon, more acrid than usual, remarked with some asperity, that he expected in a very short

time they would have to entertain an officer not yet reckoned amongst her pretentious coterie. At the mention of the word officer, Mrs. Scarr, who as usual had been impatient at his insensibility to her encomiums, relaxed into a most beneficent smile, and blandly requested to be informed of his name, rank, and other interesting particulars, in order that no time might be lost in making his acquaintance, previous to the next *soirée*, at the same time expressing her surprise that he had never before intimated his acquaintance with the party alluded to. The unexpected manner in which his announcement was received, and the eagerness depicted in Mrs. Scarr's face, rather disconcerted her husband, who, had he not been interrupted, would have saved her from the disappointment and consequent displeasure that would now recoil on himself, on the interpretation of his cynical communication. After an effort to regain his composure, he concluded to continue in the same equivocal style, and thereby, perchance, disabuse her prepossessed mind by causing a reflex action therein, and thus save himself. In pursuance whereof, he went on very cautiously and circuitously to inform her that the party alluded to, whilst undoubtedly an officer, was not an officer of the kind understood by Mrs. Scarr by that designation, but one who, though he claimed relationship to a high official (the allusion to whom had almost thrown Mrs. Scarr into another ecstasy, to the fresh discomfiture of the surgeon), namely the Sheriff, yet was held in very general disrepute; by no means select in the choice of friends, and generally intruded unbidden, and at most inopportune seasons;—that he was in fact— But Mrs. Scarr had heard enough, and spared the surgeon any further embarrassment, by very positively affirming her determination not to permit any introduction to his disreputable friend, whose acquaintance he was therefore at liberty to still monopolize; at the same time giving him sufficient assurance that he was not misunderstood, especially as she retorted on him the oft-repeated reflection, that his former recklessness had squandered her means, and that she insisted on being maintained in the style she had expected, and had a right to expect; and that, if he had not the means, he must get it by increasing his practice, or in any other way he could devise.

Moved by such imperious demands, against which there was no appeal, as well as urged by his own necessities, and further stimulated by the morbid cravings engendered by his long habits,

the surgeon found himself compelled to resort to some expedient by which to relieve his embarrassment. It was under such pressure that, although for special reasons distasteful to himself, he had decided to no longer hesitate in the fulfilment of his engagement to the lawyer, from whom, during the progress of the affair, he designed to exact instalments of the covenanted amount, and which he would do the more uncompromisingly, since he was too shrewd and correct an observer of human nature to be deceived as to the result. His astute mind possessed an intuitive facility in detecting the bias or bent of other's inclinations, whilst with equal facility he could, where advisable, disguise his own; and as there was nothing Utopian or visionary in his composition, he set about the matter of Mr. Zenas Hawkes' introduction to Miss Harriet Herbert in a cool business—though wary—way, trusting, though scarcely expecting, that some fortuitous event might occur during the negotiations, that could be craftily worked out towards the realization of a union of such uncongenial natures.

A few mornings after the scene just alluded to, and the decision arrived at, the surgeon and his amiable lady had, by way of a digest to their breakfast, been indulging in another of their interesting *tête-à-têtes*, in which, as usual, he was coming off second-best, when a ring at the bell of the side door was followed by the announcement of the arrival of Mr. Zenas Hawkes, whose coming had been by appointment.

His entrance at so desirable a moment, thus relieving Dr. Scarr from his infliction, caused that gentleman to welcome him with a heartiness that was both unusual and unaffected, but rather unfortunate, as it threw the young lawyer somewhat off his guard. Consequently, instead of complying with the invitation to be seated, after bowing to Mrs. Scarr, that essence of aroma stepped mincingly over to the good lady, and with sundry bows and gentle shakes of the hand, in which performance only the tips of her fingers and thumb were allowed to participate, he assured that excellent woman that it gave him extreme pleasure to see her at so early an hour, and that she looked positively charming *en déshabille*, and drawled out something about a resemblance to Aurora glinting through a morning drapery; and wound up by a rather less poetical allusion to sore eyes, for which he declared the sight of Mrs. Scarr at such a season to be a specific; but why he used this figure was not apparent, unless it might be assumed that he was afflicted with ophthalmia, which necessitated the use

of an eyeglass, set in gold, and suspended from the buttonhole of his waistcoat, ever and anon dexterously affixed to his left eye, from which it as incessantly fell. However, as it called up a very expressive smile to the lady's face, accompanied by some equally complimentary responses, it must have been correct; at the same time, it is possible that it might have occurred to the surgeon that an ointment prepared by his assistant would have been more efficacious, especially as he usually found the specific referred to by Mr. Zenas productive of a contrary effect in his own case.

After a few further compliments and inquiries into their mutual states of health, as also reports of the same with regard to his papa and mamma, whom he pronounced never to have been in a better state during their whole lives, the surgeon put an end thereto by requesting the young gentleman to descend with him to the surgery, into which, as they retired, he closed the door, after informing Mr. Grumphy that he was not to be disturbed.

Directed by the surgeon to be seated, the young lawyer groped about to discover any article intended for that purpose, but, notwithstanding the use of his glass, was unsuccessful, and thereupon expressed his conviction that it was 'confounded dark,' but of which the surgeon took no notice beyond again directing him 'to sit down;' which, as it was uttered in a more peremptory tone, decided the young gentleman, in default of any other convenience, to hoist himself on to the table, the surgeon meanwhile seating himself in the arm-chair.

Without further ceremony, the surgeon, freed from the influence of his wife, relapsed into his usual mood, and introduced the matter that had brought them together.

'No doubt, young gentleman,—no doubt your father has given you instructions accordant to his own views in this affair?'

'Zackly,' responded Mr. Zenas, in a careless, affected manner, twirling his eyeglass around his finger.

'And you are going to act upon them?'

'Pre-cisely.'

'You are—you are, eh?'

'Undoubted-ly, Doctor.'

'Then let's hear what they are,' said the surgeon, piqued at his flippant manner.

'Are, eh? Oh! ah! what they are?'

'Yes, what they are?' replied the surgeon curtly.

'Well, really, now, Doctor, I see you want me to peach on the old boy.'

It was very likely he had nothing to peach about.

'I wish, sir, I wish to ascertain, in the first place, if you know what you are going to do.'

'He, he, he! Well, now, honour bright;—'pon honour, you're too severe, Doctor. What I'm about?—let's see!' He raised his glass to his eye, but as this did not appear to assist his mental vision, he let it drop, and then, with an affected laugh, exclaimed, 'Oh, ah, I see now what you are driving at,—a confession, eh, Doctor? No go, no go, ole boy; up to you.'

'Confession! confession! I should be very loth, young man, to undergo any such infiction.'

'Well, now, you do beat all! oi declare you do.' This was uttered in a doubtful manner, evidently rather dubious that he quite understood the surgeon; but as the ostensible occasion of their interview was one in which young persons are ordinarily privileged to fence with those who claim an equal privilege to banter, Mr. Zenas concluded the surgeon was only putting him through the regular course, and so decided to act accordingly. 'Come, now, Doctor, say, don't be too hard on a chap; remember, ole fellow, you were young once yourself, and how you felt—he, he, he!—when Miss What-ye-ca'-em—the present Lady Scarr—twanged her darts from those lovely peepers of hers into your enamoured bosom.' At the conclusion of this bit of railery, Zenas went off into another laugh, kicked out his short legs, that were dangling some inches from the floor, and brought up by a slap on his thigh with his dexter hand, whilst he twirled his glass with the other.

The astonished surgeon, unaccustomed to such familiarity, and wincing at the unfortunate allusion to his own courtship, opened his eyes to their full extent, scanned the amused youth from head to foot, and then in a contemptuous tone bade him 'leave off his tomfoolery, and exhibit some sense if he could.'

This brought the young gentleman to a speedy termination of his jocoseness, and to a rather foolish apprehension that he had laughed at the wrong time, and thereupon he commenced an earnest search for his fumigated handkerchief, and a rearrangement of his eyeglass.

'Hark'ee, sir,' said the surgeon; 'the girl I am about to introduce you to is no fool, and from my knowledge of her is not likely to be tolerant of any such; so for once you will appear in

a new character, and act a part that, from my short acquaintance with you, I opine will be somewhat difficult.' Mr. Zenas bowed a formal assent, puckered his lips into a shape proper for whistling, but did not whistle, contenting himself with the appearance of the unconcern it implied. 'You are aware,' continued the surgeon, 'I presume, that there is an elder sister?'

'An elder sister!' repeated Mr. Zenas, who was evidently not aware of that fact.

'Yes, sir, an elder sister, and who possesses great influence over the younger, and whom it will be your interest to conciliate and gain over to your assistance.'

'How'll I do that, Doctor?' deeming it wise to defer to his advice; but perceiving a frown gathering on that gentleman's face, he exclaimed hurriedly, without affording time for a reply, 'Yes, yes; oh, ah, yes, I understand,—court 'em both, Doctor,—excellent idea!'

'Court them both!' said the surgeon, quite amused at the proposition from one whom he very much questioned if he was competent to undertake one. 'Court them both! ay, and find in the issue that he who hunts two hares leaves one and loses the other. You will do no such thing, sir—no such thing. Hark'ee! whilst in some respects these ladies are alike, their temperaments are very unlike, and will, therefore, as in cases of similar complaints in dissimilar constitutions, require dissimilar treatment,—an idea that possibly would never occur to you.'

'Oh, you're mistaken there, Doctor! I perfectly understand. You mean that—that—that is, of course—there are two sexes of women.'

'The deuce there are!' interposed the astonished surgeon, whose practice had not been sufficiently extensive to have rendered him conversant with that fact. 'Your education has not been neglected,—you have more knowledge than all your teachers. I suppose one's the female sex, and the other's the middle sex; and the surgeon gave a sarcastic chuckle.

'No, no, Doctor, 'pon honour, you mistake; no, no, I don't mean that—no, honour bright. I mean—that is—there's always two sects, two kinds of women.'

'Hem! I've found a great many more than that number within my limited observation.'

'Possible!' exclaimed the astonished youth, who now began to think he was approaching the surgeon's meaning. 'Ah, sir, you must be a man of wonderful experience; *experientia docet*,

Doctor, and is the best teacher after all. I begin to think I have a thing or two to learn yet.' This was uttered in a tone so deferential that it somewhat disarmed the surgeon, whose manner was rendering his pupil very uncomfortable; thereupon he changed his style, and entered into some particulars of the family to whom he was about to introduce him, impressing on him such points as were essential to be acted upon, in order to afford sufficient ground of encouragement to one whose dull apprehension would not permit of his being very readily discouraged, and thereby afford time for the contemplated cash advances, of which he hoped to obtain a large portion before Mr. Zenas or his father awoke from their delusion, should it turn out to be so.

Warned by the handling he had undergone, Mr. Hawkes, junior, during these counsels of his preceptor, displayed some wisdom in listening thereto in silence, without other response than requisite. Although at the conclusion satisfied there were some directions that he very imperfectly comprehended, there could be no doubt he was now better fitted to enter upon his courtship; particularly as he was slightly impressed with the thought that it might not, after all, be quite so easy an undertaking as he had imagined, or been led to infer from his father's mode of putting it, who had administered to his son's egotism by the illusion that, in the technical language of his profession, he had only to 'put in an appearance,' and the suit would be won.

'Well, sir,' exclaimed the surgeon, at the conclusion of his instructions, 'what do you think of it all?'

'Think!' responded Zenas, almost startled out of any thoughts he might have been entertaining by the abruptness of the demand.

'Yes, think! what do you think about it?'

'We-e-ll, I think, Doctor'—Catching at the moment the angry glance of his questioner, he hesitated, and in his effort to collect his thoughts, they fled.

Incensed, and without awaiting their recall, the surgeon withdrew to the shop and gave Mr. Grumphy some instructions, then went up-stairs for his hat and cane, and, returning to the perplexed youth, informed him he was ready; and the two worthies set out for Bedford Square, on the road to which but few words passed between them, neither appearing anxious to renew a conversation that thus far had not impressed either very favourably towards the other. Arrived at their destination, they were ushered into

the presence of Mrs. Herbert and her daughters, who happened to be all at home.

The surgeon introduced his *protégé* as the son of their legal adviser, informing them that he was a young gentleman in whom he took a warm interest, and felt particularly attached to,—a piece of information that naturally astonished the young gentleman, it being the only intimation thereof that he had had,—and further passed a very flattering eulogium on his forensic attainments, to the still greater marvel of the youth, who wondered by what means he had possessed himself of such correct information, but on subsequent reflection attributed it to the surgeon's penetration, or his own transparent merits.

As though unpremeditatedly, Dr. Scarr contrived to monopolize the attention of the young ladies, whilst he adroitly turned the conversation from young gentlemen in general to Mr. Zenas in particular, dwelling with some emphasis on his social and professional status, and preparing them for his puerilities, by endeavouring to impress on them that, as a young gentleman of *ton*, he indulged freely in the polite fashionable mode of conversation to the obscurity of his more sterling abilities, and which he assumed would, with young ladies of their standing, be duly estimated.

Whilst thus engaged in preparing the way for the more ready toleration of Mr. Zenas' inanities, he was also affording him an opportunity of ingratiating himself into the good opinion of the elder lady, in which, if he succeeded, it would be of great advantage in the further prosecution of the suit,—thereby securing a powerful auxiliary. This desirable end, the surgeon knew, was much more likely to be achieved with the mother than the daughters, from her predilections for the affectations of fashionable society. But, under the impression that it was his duty to confirm the flattering reference to his legal abilities, and thereby strengthen her confidence in his father, into whose hands the settlement of her late husband's estate had been entrusted, the young gentleman diverged from his usual and anticipated mode of conversation, and entered into a dissertation on the nature of leases and releases, *cognovits* and *latitats*; defining minutely the wonderful properties of a *capias quo minus*, and the distinction between that small slip of parchment and a *capias ad satisfaciendum*, much to the edification of the enlightened lady, who during the latter portion of the essay had become so abstracted, that it was quite evident, whilst bowing her

acquiescence in his learned propositions and explanations, her attention had been attracted to her daughters, the younger of whom was indulging in some sly innuendos at the expense of their new friend, but towards whom, nevertheless, the surgeon had succeeded in disposing both somewhat favourably, and were now desirous of a better acquaintance.

The way being thus prepared, the surgeon was anxious that he should commence the campaign under his own eye, in order that he might form some estimate as to the probabilities, as also be enabled to direct, admonish, or step in to his rescue at the opportune moment. With this object, observing that Mr. Zenas had lost the attention of the senior, he rose, and, exchanging places with him, commenced a repetition of his late conversation with her daughters, whilst he left the young gentleman to follow up the opening made in his favour with those ladies.

Mr. Zenas seated himself on the chair just vacated, smiled, arranged the frilled bosom of his shirt, drew down his vest, threw out his legs,—his tightly-strapped trousers objecting to any other position,—and commenced an inspection of his glazed boots, all of which proceedings elicited an arch look from the younger at the elder. The fact was, had Mr. Zenas been alone, he would have done much better; but the proximity of Dr. Scarr, who, he was conscious, was no unobservant witness to his proceedings, tended to completely discompose him,—that gentleman, by his previous counsel and conduct, having succeeded in inspiring him with a feeling of awe. At length, unable to endure the torture, he turned his chair so that his back was partially towards the surgeon, when he appeared more at ease, and, after another arrangement of his person, he commenced by observing that it was a beautiful morning, which it was not, but assented to as a matter of course by the ladies.

Perceiving his embarrassment, Miss Herbert endeavoured to relieve him, by starting a conversation on the subject with which, from the surgeon's introduction, and such portions of his discourse with her mamma as had attracted her attention, she presumed he was most familiar. She expressed a hope that he had succeeded in initiating her mamma into the subtleties of the law, especially as applicable to the business in which she was more particularly interested. These remarks, made in a tone to inspire confidence, were productive of the intended effect, and, regaining his composure, he once more dilated on the subject alluded to, and went over the same interesting definitions with which he had

enlightened the elder lady; but as it comprised very nearly all his stock of legal knowledge, it soon came to an end, and a resort was had to the eyeglass.

It was now Miss Harriet's turn to interpose, and, following up the subject, she remarked with some vivacity, 'The study of law must be very interesting, Mr. Hawkes?'

'Very, very, Miss,' responded Zenas, looking at her through the eyeglass, as it retained its place at his right eye, and then immediately dropped. 'It requires such a deep technical acquaintance with the meaning of words and phrases, that it's positively marvellous.'

'So I believe; and when attained, and you have to do with us ordinary mortals, you can make our poor, simple utterances mean just what you like.'

Mr. Hawkes shook his head with much solemnity. 'Did you ever read Coke on Littleton? or Chitty on Special Pleading? or Barnes' Reports?' to each of which interrogatories Miss Hetty said 'No.' 'Then I'll lend them to you; you'll find them most interesting.'

'I have read Gay, though, with whom I'm rather familiar.'

'Gay! let me see,—Gay on—on—well, it's escaped me now. May I ask what he wrote on?'

'Well, he confirms what I have just said,—

“I know you lawyers can with ease
Twist and turn meanings as you please;”

and Miss Hetty laughed.

'Oh, now, 'pon honour, I declare, Mr. Gay shouldn't come down on us in that way;' and Mr. Zenas indulged in an affected laugh. 'He's too hard,—'pon honour he is,—too severe; tell him so next time you see him.'

The ladies looked at each other and smiled.

'Have you ever pleaded yet?' Miss Harriet was not sufficiently posted to know the difference between an attorney and a barrister.

'Not yet,' said Mr. Zenas; passing his fingers through his hair.

'How pretty you'll look when you get that powdered horse-hair wig on, that I saw the other day when passing through Westminster Hall. Will you have to wear a short-cropped one, like a handsome, tall young gentleman I met gliding along there with a red bag in his hand? or a long tippet one, like that sour old creature, that, blinking between it like an owl at mid-day, rudely pushed past me in the same place?'

'He, he, he! capital!' responded the young gentleman, as he slapped his thigh, and thereby attracted the attention of the surgeon, whose frown disconcerted him.

'Do you intend to make your *debut* soon, because I'd like to be present?'

'Not for a term or two, Miss.'

'What's a term?'

'A term, Miss? Well, you see, a term is,—how will I explain it?'

'Never mind, Mr. Hawkes,' interposed the elder, who was fearful that her sister was carrying on the discourse solely to perplex him.

'Well, I suppose she'd be none the wiser if I explained.'

'Indeed!' responded Miss Hetty tartly. 'We are *so* dull of comprehension! A second Daniel! Please don't die yet, lest all wisdom die with you.'

'Hetty!' interposed her sister.

'Alas!' said Mr. Zenas, under a sudden hallucination respecting the import of the last words, as he gave a sigh accompanied by an amorous look, and pressed his hand to his heart; 'oh fear oh'm dying already;'—a proceeding, however, that appeared to take the ladies by surprise, and caused them to regard him inquisitively, if not suspiciously. But as he still held his hand to the same spot, and continued to sigh and look upwards, it was evident he was fully impressed with the idea that he had seized upon a most happy impromptu occasion to commence his suit; whereupon, restraining herself with some effort, and assuming an air of gravity, Miss Harriet sighed too, and exclaimed, as she regarded him with a commiserating air,—

'How sorry I feel for you, sir.' Mr. Zenas' eye glistened, and he smiled. 'I had no idea you were so ill as that. Have you consulted Dr. Scarr?'

The mention of this name sent an involuntary shudder through Mr. Zenas, and for a moment acted as a refrigerator on the warm emotions stirring within. Rallying himself, however, with some appositeness he replied, in a subdued manner, that 'he feared the malady was beyond *his* art,—it was too deep-seated.'

'Well, your case is bad. Have you been long in that state?'

'Within the last half-hour,' replied the young lawyer, raising his eyes and looking most languishingly at his questioner, whose first impulse was to yield to a hearty laugh, but the next to draw herself up, and the blush mantling her cheek told that Mr. Zenas' precipitate action was not entirely misunderstood or pleasing.

Then endeavouring to persuade herself that it was only intended for a little bit of gallantry, she rallied, and commenced responding in a way that rather misled the obtuse youth, and in the excitement of the moment he rattled on in a manner that revealed the salient points of his character, and proportionably lowered him in the estimation of the ladies.

At length, wearied by the incessant chatter of the loquacious youth, Miss Herbert ceased to respond, whilst Miss Harriet took up a piece of lace edging, upon which she had been engaged prior to the arrival of the visitors, and commenced following the delicate tracery with her needle.

Without noticing that he had lost their attention, the egotistical Mr. Zenas continued for some few minutes longer to amuse *himself* by reminiscences of personal adventures, accompanying them by occasional bursts of laughter, that intimated that at least one of the number was being entertained, until, finally exhausted, he came to a sudden halt. Observing that the younger lady was just then engaged studying the intricacies of the pattern that she had laid on the table and straightened out, he turned his chair more directly in front of her, raised his glass and lowered his head, as though to assist in a critical examination thereof, but was prevented doing so by the young lady, who at that instant re-attached the lace-work to the pattern, and held it up towards the light, and then apostrophized it. 'Yes, I think that will do, just a little more on that—on the stem of that leaf.'

Not being posted up in laces, Mr. Zenas did not, as might have been expected, attempt to confirm the young lady in her opinion, but drummed his forehead with his fingers, as though to call forth some unremembered event, on failure whereof he abruptly exclaimed, 'What's the news, Miss Harriet?'

'The news!' said the young lady addressed, at that moment engaged threading her very fine cambric needle, at which she made two or three attempts before succeeding, and at the conclusion whereof her thoughts abstractedly wandered from Mr. Zenas' question to the edging. Then, recollecting herself, she exclaimed, 'Oh, the news! you want the news, do you? Well—the—news,'—Miss Hetty's thoughts were evidently on an excursion for something piquant,—'the news is, that a new species of the monkey tribe has been found in Africa, similar in some respects to the chimpanzee not long since discovered, and which bears so very strong a resemblance to the human species, that it is thought to be the missing link.'

'Possible! and have they caught one?' said Mr. Zenas, quite interested.

'Yes, they captured a young one, said to be an excellent specimen, and forwarded it to England—to London, where it arrived the other day. But—was it not a pity?—just as the vessel arrived in the Thames, somewhere near the docks, the silly animal escaped, and they have been searching for him high and low ever since.'

'Pon honour, too bad, too bad! What a silly creature! it'll lose itself, depend on it.'

'Lose itself! of course it will.'

'Ah, I thought so, just expect nothing else. But why don't they capias him,—lay the venue in Middlesex; and nab him before he does any mischief?'

'Just so! that's what I say,' said the young lady, as she laid her work again on the table, and examined the last hole she had worked, and then resumed, in a careless tone, 'But there *have* been several young gentlemen arrested, and taken before Sir Richard Birnie at Bow Street,—by mistake, of course.'

'Bless me! is there such a resemblance?'

'Striking!' continued the young lady, holding up the lace again to the light; and then, as though attending more to it than the subject on which she was speaking, added, 'They say one mark of identification is, he's an incessant jabberer, as all monkeys are.' Miss Hetty looked up at Mr. Zenas, and then plied her needle with close attention.

'How extraordinary! is it true, Miss Harriet,—honour bright?'

'Do you question it, Mr. Hawkes?' replied the young lady, with a mock air of gravity.

'O no, 'pon honour! oh, not for the world!' responded Mr. Zenas deprecatingly, and by way of atoning for this unintentional manifestation of incredulity, he added divertingly (with a laugh), as he looked at her through his glass, 'Perhaps they'll take me for him?'

Miss Bertha, whose attention had been attracted by her sister's apocryphal tale, became alarmed lest the temptation to her spontaneous wit should cause the thoughtless girl to forget herself, but was relieved as Miss Harriet replied, with apparent fervour,—

'O no, Mr. Hawkes, they would never make that mistake.'

'And why not?' returned the young gentleman, flattered by the earnestness of her repudiation of his surmise, and anticipat-

ing her answer would afford further gratification by the utterance of some agreeable compliments.

'Because, though you may have as many tricks as a monkey, you are not half so diverting ;' and thereupon she became absorbed in her needlework.

'Hetty ! Hetty !' exclaimed her sister, shocked at this peroration of the irrepressible young lady. 'Don't mind her, Mr. Hawkes,—it's only girlish love of fun. Why, Hetty, I'm astonished !'

'Mind it !' retorted Mr. Zenas, who, notwithstanding his density, had apprehended something of the young lady's meaning, and was trying to assume an air of indifference by arranging his frilled bosom. 'Mind it ! did you ever see water run off a duck's back ?'

It was now the young ladies' turn to look surprised, and a pause ensued. Mr. Hawkes had created a sensation, as he might have been more fully sensible of, had he been quick enough to notice the interchange of looks between the sisters ; that of the elder, however, aside from the rudeness of the retaliatory speech, seeming to imply that Miss Harriet had only got what she deserved, a *quid pro quo*. But as Mr. Zenas was still entirely engrossed in the adjustment of his linen, he was not aware of the effect of his words ; and, after withdrawing his perfumed handkerchief from his pocket, and fumigating himself therewith, was about to make some further remark, when, looking up at the glass at the end of the room, he caught the scowling glance of the surgeon reflected therein, whose attention had been drawn to his *protégé* during the last utterance. The result was that Mr. Zenas was unable to say what he intended, and he experienced a return of his embarrassment.

Begging Mrs. Herbert to excuse him, Dr. Scarr rose, and seated himself once more by the side of the young ladies, addressing a few words to Miss Herbert ; whereupon Miss Harriet rose, and, begging pardon, went over and seated herself on the sofa by the side of her mamma, followed, however, by Mr. Zenas, too happy to have an excuse to escape closer contact with the surgeon, more especially so as it afforded a marked opportunity to evidence his preference for the society of the younger sister.

It was not long before Mr. Hawkes, junior, regained his equanimity, and was doing his best to entertain his auditors, in which he was apparently successful, judging by the laughter of

the trio, which was frequent and hearty, especially as indulged in by the young gentleman, who went off into loud bursts, slapping his thigh and throwing himself back, overcome by his vehemence, and on recovery protesting, 'pon honour, that it was too bad,' probably called forth by some further hard hits of the junior lady, if the occasional appealing looks on Mrs. Herbert's face was an indication.

Whilst the young attorney was thus pleasantly occupied, Dr. Scarr, after a few preliminary professional inquiries and directions with regard to Miss Herbert's health, had warily glided off to other topics, until he approached that which most concerned himself at the present moment, and in reference to which the conversation was carried on in a lowered tone. Attracted by this change in his intercourse with her sister, the quick-witted Hetty was not slow in detecting the workings of her pale face, and became anxious to disturb a conversation that, she was sensible, was distasteful to her. With this intent she had more than once half-risen to join them, when a look from her mamma restrained her. Of one thing she was satisfied, from the surgeon's furtive glances and manner, that the subject of conversation had relation to herself. Though no proficient in the abstruser science of ethics or metaphysics, her perceptions were vivid, and her discernment of affinities and incongruities sufficiently keen to render her quick and ready to analyze occurring events in their possible relation to motives, and often approached near enough to obtain a clue thereto. It was not, therefore, strange that, to a mind so constituted, the visit and conduct of two such opposites as the surgeon and his young *friend* should present itself in so absurd a light, as at once to suggest a train of reasoning that conducted her to the conclusion that their appearance there that morning arose from some other cause than either business or friendship, which was confirmed by the occasional embarrassment of the younger, who evidently stood in some kind of awe of the elder,—a state that had not escaped her notice, as also the transparent efforts of Mr. Zenas to render himself particularly and pointedly agreeable to herself. Far from being flattered by *such* attention from a young gentleman, although the first in her girlish experience, and therefore the more likely to excite a pleasant flutter, her estimate of the young lawyer, both as to intellect and bearing, placed him too far below her ideal to excite other than pity, if not contempt, at what she deemed an unwarrantable presumption on the part of a

stranger; and which, weighing one thing with another, appeared very much like some preconcerted plan. Yet there was something so ludicrous in the whole proceeding as to render the thing too ridiculous to be seriously angry at. Just home from a school in which her seclusion from the society of the other sex had tended to 'hedge them round with a divinity,' she had not yet become so conversant with the reality as to conceive that they were cast in so earthly a mould, or made of such sterner or coarser stuff, as recognisable in Mr. Zenas Hawkes, and therefore, untainted yet by fashionable guile, or moved by any impelling expediency, she deemed it proper and honest to stand sentinel at the entrance to her own heart, and, if need be, even rudely to repulse when too persistently assaulted, rather than by a simpering, enigmatical course to allure or play with the affections of any. Consequently, without pausing to ask what others thought or counselled, intense in purpose as in thought, the result was instant decision and action.

More than once had the suppressed sigh of her sister reached her acute ear; at length, no longer able to control herself, she threw her lace-work into Mrs. Herbert's lap for her inspection, and, with a request to Mr. Zenas to be excused, in another second had dropped on her knees, and was peering into Bertha's face, and before she had time to avoid the searching look, observed the moisture that suffused her eyes. With an ill-concealed look of displeasure, Hetty's eyes encountered those of the surgeon, who, in no way disconcerted, smiled blandly, and made some trite remark, but without eliciting any corresponding response.

It should be remarked that Miss Harriet had not been many days from school, before, with her usual intuition, she became sensible of some strangeness in the surgeon's manner towards her sister, amounting at times to an apparent ascendancy over her. At first she persuaded herself that it arose from Bertha's sensitive nature being rendered more susceptible to influence by her prolonged illness, but further observation convinced her that it was the result of some mysterious cause,—it might be physical, but it bore more the appearance of mental,—that was resolving her otherwise firm will into a melancholy passiveness, such as a stern, cold man like the surgeon, availing himself of the advantage his professional authority gave him, might too readily obtain a mastery over. Under such view, and a felt personal repugnance, she had more than once suggested to both her mother and

sister the propriety of a change in their medical attendant, but to this both expressed an emphatic dissent. Mrs. Herbert was convinced that no other could compete with Dr. Scarr, who had been the family surgeon for some years, and attended her husband during his last illness, which alone would have been sufficient to have decided her in his retention, and assented to by her invalid daughter, with whose ailment it was contended he was so thoroughly conversant.

Not in the least disturbed by the young lady's defiant regard, the surgeon resumed his discourse with Miss Herbert, though now in reference to her illness; and then, turning to the sister, exclaimed in a louder key, intended to reach the ear of Mrs. Herbert, that he considered her sister so much improved, that, as intimated on the occasion of his former visit, she might, with much-hoped-for benefit, be early removed to the country. Whereupon Mrs. Herbert joined in the conversation, and it was decided that she should be removed at the commencement of the ensuing week to a cottage in the neighbourhood of Salisbury, the surgeon having recommended that inland southern locality in preference to any other, or even to the seaside; especially insisting upon her dispensing with slops,—as he designated tea and coffee,—and substituting new milk from the cow, of which she could not partake too abundantly. Whereupon Miss Harriet informed him that his directions should be attended to, cows being plentiful in the neighbourhood. These definite instructions would not have been worth while relating, but that they drew forth an unfortunate observation from Mr. Zenas, who was anxious to avail himself of the opportunity of testifying his great interest in the family. His limited acquaintance with the dairy had caused him to associate their progeny with cows giving milk, and, in accordance with this idea, he suggested that of course they would require a calf or two. The surprise with which his suggestion was received, which, but for his serious air, would have been taken as intended for a little pleasantry, was interpreted by the young lawyer as an expression of wonder at his sagacity and their own thoughtlessness, and thereupon, to increase the one and to come to their assistance in making up for the latter, he begged them to be under no sort of anxiety on that score, as he had a particular friend who dealt in such animals, and would therefore take upon himself the agreeable office of providing them therewith. Before Mrs. Herbert had time to recover herself, and politely instruct him in the correct state of matters, Miss Harriet,

unable to restrain her vexation at his unsolicited interference, as well as the too strong temptation to avail herself of the ludicrous mode in which the offer of assistance was made, to retaliate on him the indignation engendered by the conclusions to which her reasoning had during the interview led, in a most deferential tone and manner demanded 'if the friend referred to was his father;' at the same time graciously expressing a hope 'that in such case he would not send too many, as *one* would be more than sufficient.'

Mrs. Herbert was scandalized, Miss Herbert blushed; whilst the surgeon, getting close to the dazed youth's ear, muttered, 'Served you right—served you right,' caught up his hat and cane, and took a hurried leave of the ladies, and was soon chafing along the road on his return to Catherine Street.

Mr. Zenas was bewildered. That something was wrong he knew, but what or wherein the wrong-doing consisted was beyond his comprehension. He stood spell-bound, his eyes fixed on the door, listening to the sound of the retreating steps of the surgeon. An emotion of pity—it might be regret—at her precipitate conduct recalled the young lady to a sense of his position, and with as much calmness and ease of manner as she could assume, she endeavoured to atone for her brusqueness by little efforts to restore Mr. Zenas to his equilibrium, in which she would have doubtless been successful, had it not been for the impression made by the ruffled, behaviour of the incensed surgeon. So that, only partially restored, notwithstanding the pressing invitation to stay to lunch, which, as at that moment the armed knight at the base of the clock on the mantelpiece struck the hour of one, she informed him would be ready in a few seconds, he took his leave, promising to repeat his visit before their departure to the country.

'There!' exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, as the street door closed, and she threw herself indignantly on the sofa, 'you have done it now, Miss. When will you cease your intolerable, unladylike conduct?'

CHAPTER XXVI.

WILLIE FIGHTS.

FOR two or three weeks the scenes and incidents connected with his new position so fully engaged the thoughts and attention of Willie Wilton, to the exclusion of all others, that, except only at brief moments, they had seldom wandered back to the old room in St. Martin's Lane. The novelty and exciting character of the circumstances in which he was placed presented so striking a contrast to his hitherto uneventful life, that he was buoyed up and borne along without being himself aware of their oblivious effect. But as the novelty wore off, and the rude shocks he now began to encounter became more frequent, a sense of his real position gradually dawned upon him. Deserted by the two boys with whom he made his first appearance at the Hall, who had learned that it would tax all their ingenuity to take care of themselves, he experienced a loneliness that appeared almost insupportable, and, yielding to the depression occasioned thereby, he sought some retired spot where he could, unobserved, indulge in the unrestrained overflowings of his oppressed heart.

Adjoining the playground, at the rookery end, from which it was only separated by a low stone wall, was a thickly-wooded enclosure called the plantation. After proceeding some yards on a level with the ground on the rookery side, through clumps of bush, the descent became steep. Down this ran a pathway through tangled underwood and trees, until it terminated at the River Greta, that flowed past the base of the wood, which latter extended some distance on either hand. Along its shaded banks, in season and out of season, the juvenile Izak Waltons of the Academy enjoyed their piscatory sport.

In a secluded spot near the brow of the descent, but at a distance from the pathway, amidst a cluster of screening brush, Willie improvised a retreat into which he could withdraw without

the risk of interruption, and there abandon himself to the prostration of heart of which he became often the subject ; and where, too, he resumed those acts of devotion to which he had been habituated under Miss Austen's roof, of late completely neglected. As he scarcely ever retired to this spot without experiencing an influence at once soothing and strengthening, he came to regard it with reverence, and it became wondrously attractive.

It was doubtless owing to his serious deportment, as well as his strict regard for truth, that an unwonted influence was gradually being exercised by the gentle boy over the blustering, bullying lads amongst whom his lot was to be henceforth cast,—a something hitherto unrealized in that moral desert, not operating beneficially in every instance, or immediately, for there were exceptional natures that nothing of the kind would move, but in the general.

One evening, as was now almost his daily practice, Willie had retired into his little sacristy to give vent to his impassioned feelings, and obtain that relief he was wont to experience. As he lay extended on the ground, his cap over his eyes, his mind became, as more than once before, affected by an undefined consciousness of the presence of an unseen friend, like unto dear loving Aunt, into whose ear, as of old, he could, unrebuked, pour his tale of no longer imaginary, but real and bitter sorrow ; and as he did so, there stole over him a sensation of calm, not unmixed with awe,—the place seemed pervaded by the shadowy presence. Presently the hallowed influence abated, and now his thoughts passed to the morose Brian Grumphy, whose harsh nature he fancied he saw in embryo in the callous boys around, as well as in the older men and women, and wondered if every man and boy was the same, and if the assistant, too, had grown up in this hateful place ; and would he himself also come to resemble the rest, and be as bad, and cruel, and wicked ? and he shivered at the suggestions ; but which, thereupon, gave place to kindlier thoughts, possibly the inspiration of his tutelary angel, for 'Do not their angels see their Father's face.' O no ! Mr. Grumphy was not like that ; for did he not know, under that stern, forbidding exterior, there was a heart that, if it never held another,—too rugged and narrow for that,—yet enshrined him—was all his own. And so he pondered and analyzed in his own simple mode, until, separating the crude materials, he concreted them into a being not less contradictory than the original, but com-

prehensible by himself, and with whom he was assimilating himself, until something of the force of Grumphy's character seemed imbibed by the frail boy, and his fervid spirit had become affected by the subtle transmission of the nervo-vital fluid of that implacable man, imparting an energy and force to his girlish nature that would have done him good stead had it been permanent, fitting him the better to cope with the antagonisms of the place.

Overcome by the sultriness of the weather, Willie fell into a doze, in which his waking musings still continued to float through and retain possession of his mind, and soon from Mr. Grumphy he passed back to Miss Austen. He was home : every familiar object in the room presented itself as palpably as on the eve before he left it ; and now Mary Jones rose in distinctness before him, in all her loving, patronising manner. There he was, hiding behind the old barrel chair, now jumping around her, then laughing at his own simplicity, until, the pinnacle of bliss reached, of a sudden he was going down-stairs, wrapped up as on the morn of his departure, and the tears were running down both their cheeks. The stairs creaked as they descended, but it sounded like the crackling of dead sticks, and Mary glided through some bushes, that, as he essayed to follow, sprang back and struck him. He awoke, and was about to jump up and call after her, when his ear caught the sound of voices, and, pausing to listen, he became conscious of his whereabouts, and that some one was in the vicinity. Anxious that the place of his retirement should remain a secret, he remained still, and thus unintentionally overheard two boys concocting some plot.

'Oh, ah,, that'll do first-rate ! you leave the door unlocked,' said one.

'No, yer fool ! then they'd blame me at once for not locking it,' replied the other.

'Well, then, how'll ye do ?'

'I'll take out the nail that fastens the window, and then, when it's dark, we'll go round to the back, and you'll climb up on my shoulders, and get through the window.'

'Oh, ah, that'll do first-rate ! But hadn't you better get on my shoulders ? you know all about the room in the dark better nor me.'

'Now you're funking !'

'No I arn't,—don't you think it !'

'What are you afraid of ?'

'Nothin'; I ain't afraid o' nothin'.'

'Yes, ye are now. O my, afraid o' the dark !'

'No, my covey, I ain't; only you know the place best.'

'How do I know it better nor you?'

'Cos ye do, I count.'

'Oh, well, I'll do it,—I ain't afraid; ' and the two boys passed on towards the river.

Musing on what he had just heard, as soon as the crackling of the sticks and slashing of the boughs and bushes indicated that the speakers were at a safe distance, Willie retraced his steps to the playground, and had nearly reached the outside of the rookery, when he encountered two boys sauntering towards him, with their hands upon each other's shoulders.

'Ulloa, young un! whar'st ben?' said the bigger of the two, as he stepped before and stopped him.

'Nowhere in particular,' replied Willie.

'Whar'st going?'

'Nowhere.'

'Then aw'll gie ye summut to do.' Whereupon he directed him to go in search of a boy he named, and ask for the loan of his knife, as he was going to cut a stick in the plantation.

Willie hesitated. Had he been asked in a more civil tone, or the commission been one readily performed, it is more than probable he would have executed it without a word, as he had generally evinced a willingness in this respect; but when he considered the order might necessitate a long search, in the end unsuccessful, he demurred.

'Did ye hear me?' exclaimed the boy.

'Yes,' said Willie, roused by the boy's imperious tone, and actuated by the transient wilfulness imparted by his recent musings on the character of Mr. Grumphy, and which, still operating, was thus early and unexpectedly called into action.

'Then why don't ye move?'

'Because I'm not going to be ordered in that way by you,' replied Willie, the colour that still lingered in his cheeks disappearing.

The two boys looked at each other, and then at Willie, evidently quite unprepared for such an issue.

'You ain't, ain't ye? I'll soon see about that. Ye ain't broke in yet, eh?' and, picking up a piece of stick that lay near him, he advanced towards the young lad and raised it to strike him.

'That's it! gie't him, Bangs,' said his companion, who was none

other than his earliest friend Kappa, who had owed him a grudge ever since the eventful morning of his attack on the three in the store-room, which ended in his own discomfiture by a flank movement on the part of the usher.

'Don't strike me,' said Willie, half-appealingly and half-defiantly, drawing back a step, whilst the blood seemed to rush and prickle through his brain, producing a sensation throughout his frame as though every nerve had become suddenly tightened.

'What! ye'll hit me again, by jingo?' Throwing down the stick, he cried, 'Here, Kappa, hold my coat!' and in another instant was tearing away at that garment in a most excited way.

Now Bangs, with whom we are already slightly acquainted, was what might be designated, for want of a better term, a middle boy; that is, though yet too young—or rather too small, for age had less to do with it—to claim a place amongst the *big* boys, he was ever on the alert to assert an authority over any other of doubtful physical force, by which course, as others before him had done, he was slowly winning a big boy's standing, and never lost an opportunity of trying it on. In stature he was but little taller than Willie, being a squat, under-sized lad, upon whom Grumbleby diet had operated in checking his growth, but his bared arms showed him to be a sinewy, muscular, as well as older lad.

'Gie't 'im, Bangs,' said Kappa, as he clutched his coat, and clapped his hands.

'Won't I? I'll give him toko.'

In another instant the shouts of some boys who had been attracted to the spot were re-echoed all over the playground, 'A feyt! a feyt!' As if by magic, down went hockey, ball, rope, and other articles, and, leaping over the walls, up from behind every sheltered place where they had been lazily reclining in groups, swarmed a host of boys, chasing each other towards the scene of action, shouting and screaming, and demanding, 'What's up?' 'What's the row?' 'Be gow, here's a lark!' As they arrived one after the other, breathless inquiries were made as to who were the fellows; on ascertaining which, there followed expressions of surprise or contempt, whilst a few, *sotto voce*, whispered a hope that the little one would beat. The big boys of course were dead against Willie, as, whatever their predilections towards him, no tolerance could be given to resistance of bigger boys,—that is, those claiming to be relatively so; the small boys of

course could only express themselves as intimidated, frightened at his temerity, yet secretly exulting at his hardihood.

'I don't want to fight,' said Willie.

'Don't thee, though, pardner?' said Bangs, who by this time had tucked up both his shirt-sleeves, and tied the cord that suspended his trousers around the waist thereof. 'I'll make thee, or I'll give ye such a drubbing ye never had.'

Willie looked round, but there was no escape; already a large ring had been formed by the excited crowd, in the centre of which himself and his antagonist stood facing each other.

'Come on,' said Bangs, eager for the fray, and commencing to square in the Crib and Molyneux style, as laid down by the fancy at Grumbleby; but just then his officious friend Kappa stepped behind him, and, claiming to be his backer, pulled him on to his knee, and began in an eager way to instruct him how to deliver the Crib blow, that, tradition held, had broken the Molyneux jaw.

No backer appeared on Willie's side. The bigger boys would not interfere, as he was in contest with one who was fast making his way to their privileged order. Had it been one of his own size or standing, there would have been no lack, and under those circumstances no smaller boy dared venture to proffer his aid.

'Come! are ye coming on, my covey?'

'Wallop him, Bangs!' cried half-a-dozen big boys.

Willie stood immovable. A shudder passed through him at the bare idea of striking another, and he cast an appealing look at the unsympathizing lads around, who were becoming impatient at the delay. But there was no help. His thoughts rushed back to one who could and would have scattered the whole crowd; he was far away. But with those thoughts came back the emotions that had stirred within him whilst in the seclusion of the plantation, and his nerves and muscles stiffened, and his hands involuntarily clenched. At that moment a boy from behind advanced, and pushed him towards his opponent with such force, that Willie stumbled and fell. In a second a tall boy of about eighteen, who had just then sauntered up to the scene of commotion, forced his way through the ring, and bestowed a kick on the retreating boy that sent him sprawling amongst the crowd, who thereupon set up a shout of laughter.

'Fair play, if you please, Bowen,' said the tall boy, as he assisted Willie to rise, patted his head, and then fell back to the

inner face of the circle. From the deference acceded to him, it was evident, had he chosen to interpose further, he might for the present have saved the new boy, though probably not without much clamour and even resistance from the larger boys, who were now too much stirred up to be easily appeased; but he knew too well the consequences of such interference,—that it would only aggravate and intensify the spirit that had thus been evoked,—and therefore it was better, nay, to the young lad's advantage in the long run, that the unequal contest should take place at once and under his own eye, although of the issue there could be no doubt.

It was unfortunate that his first encounter should be with one so manifestly his superior; but it would have this advantage, that a little one that was so plucky as to tackle such odds, would be spared a succession of combats with those of his own size, and the more speedily fall into his inevitable place, in all probability a better one than had he begun lower down. Such at least was the philosophy of the senior boy, taught by the stern teaching of experience, and who therefore contented himself with standing silently by to see fair play.

As Willie made no advance, it was suggested by one of the boys that Bangs should give him the coward's blow, which was re-echoed by several voices. Thereupon he rose from his backer's knee, and promptly stepping towards the youth, struck him on the shoulder, exclaiming, 'Coward's blow!'

Willie looked perplexed, at a loss to comprehend his meaning, but the shout that arose, accompanied by hisses and pointed fingers, told him that he was an object of derision. His reddening face at once betokened how strongly nature had triumphed over grace, and, with a wild, piteous cry, he darted at the boy, and struck him in the breast, exclaiming as he did so, with only a partial comprehension of the meaning, 'Coward's blow for you!' Bangs reeled.

'Stand back, stand back!' resounded through the crowd.

'O my, ain't he plucky?' whispered some small boys, who were being forced back to the outer edge of the circle by three seniors, who took their places.

With a compressed lip and savage eye, Bangs advanced, rapidly aimed a blow intended for his face, but which, striking his breast, nearly upset him. Recovering himself immediately, Willie made a rush, and returned the blow with such effect that it knocked his antagonist on to Kappa, who thereupon quickly crawled out of their road.

A clapping of hands ensued, accompanied by cries of 'Well done, little 'un ! by jingo, th'art game !'

Mortified by this unexpected upset, and aggravated by the applause awarded to his opponent, he gathered himself up, and, forgetting Kappa's scientific counsel, rushed upon Willie, and dealt him two or three vigorous blows, which were parried with some dexterity, but were not returned with the same vehemence.

After a struggle of a few seconds, the bigger boy stepped back for a moment to wipe his bleeding nose, the sight of which infuriated him, and he returned to the charge with greater impetuosity. The feeble resistance he encountered showed that the strength of the younger was failing. Still the spirited boy held out, and bestowed a few more blows on Bangs' facial, whereat, gathering up his strength, he threw himself with all his weight on Willie, and struck him in the face with a force that knocked him backwards, and he fell senseless to the ground ; whereat the larger boys set up a shout, and, declaring Bangs had beat, crowded round him to shake hands. The tall boy above alluded to caught up Willie in his arms, and, followed by some of the younger lads, carried him to the beck, and laid him down by its side. Assisted by another lad, he bathed his hands and face, wiping off the blood from the latter, as it trickled down, with a piece of lining torn from the sleeve of the other boy's coat, who, without uttering a word, seemed to be equally interested in the little lad.

After a while Willie opened his eyes, looked into the tall boy's face, sighed, and closed them again. Wetting the piece of cloth, the boy held it to his bruised face, now much swollen. At length he was sufficiently restored to be raised and walk, when, with the assistance of the other, the tall lad led him up to the school-room, just then empty, the boys having returned to their games and other occupations, interrupted by the encounter. As the big lad seated him at a desk at the further end, he bid him remain there quiet for a time, assuring him he would soon be all right again, and then left him to himself, whilst his assistant lingered about the room at a distance.

During this brief adventure and ministry the tall boy had become interested in Willie, and felt himself strangely drawn towards him. He had on one or two previous occasions come in contact with him, and been attracted by his gentle and conciliatory manners, as well as been moved by his bright, handsome features ; but he was now completely won by the unanticipated

exhibition of such spirit in so fragile a form, and henceforth resolved to be his protector, as far as he could without trenching on the prescriptive rights of the institution, which could only be accomplished by exercising some special authority over him that would render him amenable to his orders at all times. The science of fagging, as existing at public schools of the highest pretensions, had not been reduced to a system at Grumbleby; each bigger or stronger boy claimed a right in common to command the services, at any time, not of one only, but of any of the subordinates he chose, the only exemption from such demand resting, not even in the fact of the boy being employed at the time under the orders of some bigger lad, but in the more cogent one that the one he selected to obey in the dilemma was the strongest of the two. As the lad who had so opportunely interposed on behalf of Willie was generally acknowledged to occupy the highest position in this rôle, the advantage of his protectorate was unquestionable. As he not unfrequently threw his *ægis* over some oppressed boy, he became a favourite with the juniors, which occasioned strong remonstrances and dislikes on the part of some of the seniors. It was a fundamental rule that every boy must *lick* or be *licked*. The government of the school was not attempted under any other régime than coercion. There was a code of licking, and it was vigorously carried out by the executive, and thence, through every descending link, to the smallest boy, who, in default of any one below him, licked the first small village lad that he could with impunity. The system was not unique, because *then* in vogue in other public schools, although not to the same extent or so codified as in the Yorkshire academies. With the governed, it was the sole standard by which their status amongst their fellows was measured, and from which there was no appeal.

Seated on the form, his head leaning on the desk, and his face buried in his hands, Willie was now realizing the lonely, wretched portion henceforth his. No tender bosom, as formerly, on which to rest his aching, wounded head; no champion, who, on the recital of his wrongs, would have never stayed his hand until his ungovernable temper had wreaked a savage retaliation on every boy or man, teacher and master, who by their connivance, expressed or implied, had injured *his* boy; no gentle, sisterly heart, mingling her tears with her soothing words, to hug and squeeze away his grief, and kiss away his sorrow, and never cease her little offices until the cheery laugh broke through

the trickling drops. Oh, what would they all say, could they see the marred face of their birdie now?

'Aw say, young un', whar's tha blubberin' at? 'Tha'lt moind what's sed next toim, aw'll wager; aw'm hauf a moind to lick ye mysen, for yon toim up-stairs.' This was uttered by Kappa, who had been in search of Willie to gratify himself by a sight of his bruised face, actuated by something of the nature which a canine evinces when he witnesses the attack of one of his species on another. 'Oop, mon, an' fetch ma a drenk.' Willie raised his disfigured and besmeared face, looked at the boy to see if he had understood him, and, on his repeating the order, asked where he should get a mug. 'Find one, an' luk sharp.' Inquiring amongst the younger boys, he obtained the loan of a tin mug, a few of which were kept hidden in holes, or caves, as they were termed, in the stone walls around, ready for such demands; at night kept filled with water by those who were afraid to go down alone to the beck in the dark.

On his way back from the stream he was met by another boy, who took the tin out of his hand, slaked his thirst, and emptied the rest on the ground, then threw down the mug and walked off. Whereupon Willie returned to the brook, and, refilling it, brought it to Kappa, who upbraided him for his dilatoriness, and again threatened to lick him, and, after satisfying himself, threw the water that remained in the tin into Willie's face. Stung to the quick at this requital of his prompt obedience, the water dripping from his head and running down his neck, the boy, unable to master his wounded feelings, with a choking sensation, was about to throw himself on his persecutor, reckless of consequences, and regardless of the resolution he had previously come to not again to permit himself to be overcome by his temper, and be betrayed into useless resistance. Drive away nature, says the proverb, and it comes back at a gallop, and thus it was about to carry the incensed youth full tilt against a barrier too high to be overleaped; but happily at that instant a strong hand placed on his shoulder held him forcibly back, and the voice of his late friend exclaimed,—

'Wilton, I want you.' At the same time significantly shaking his head at the other, he exclaimed, 'Kappa, take care! It's only a coward would bully a boy so soon after his punishment.' As the other was about to answer, he stepped towards him, and in a stern voice said, 'Not a word, or I'll pay you at once what I owe you.'

At this the other moved slowly off, muttering something about 'his thinking to bounce it over everybody, but he'd find his mistake one of these days,' but which did not reach the ear of the other, who moved off with the young boy in another direction.

As the youth who had thus fortuitously interfered in Willie's behalf will henceforth occupy a prominent place in the story, it is necessary to state a few particulars relating to his personal.

In figure he was rather tall, especially when compared with the under-sized *big* boys amongst whom he ranked, whose ordinary stunted growth was a consequence of their scant innutritious food, insufficient to replace the ordinary waste, much less to afford any surplus to be assimilated in the maintenance of animal growth. Being a parlour boarder may in some measure account for this exceptional condition, but as even in that enviable position he was subject to 'short commons,' he had the same gaunt slender appearance that identified him with the ordinary Grumbleby; his features were regular, his head well shaped, though seen at some disadvantage at present, his light hair, now shading into a darker colour, having recently undergone a clipping by the shears of Tommy Kaily, who added to his other employments that of hairdresser to the establishment, by no means particular in his style, so long as the average quantity fell under the shearing process, the excess taken by one clip being made up by the excess left by the next. Black eyes, oval face, slender chin, and thin lips, about which was an expression of firmness, with a high forehead, indicated that when the due quantum of flesh was superadded, he would pass for a handsome boy. Exercise, and a general participation in all the games of the boys, had imparted great elasticity to his body, in the movements of which there was a natural ease, and even grace, that, but for the unbecoming dress, would have been more perceptible, although in this respect he was better assorted than usual, owing, primarily, to some private understanding between the master tailor and himself, to the mutual advantage of both, and, secondarily, to certain considerations influencing the head to extend some little better treatment to him. His general demeanour made him a favourite with the servants of the establishment. Such was Friendzburgh Trelawney in person; his mental and moral endowments will be best understood by the little that has transpired, added to what will hereafter be manifested.

'Wilton,' said Trelawney, as they sauntered along the playground towards the gate leading on the road, 'you must not fight boys bigger than yourself, or you'll get into trouble.'

'And am I to be ordered about, then, just as they like?' replied Willie, scarcely able to restrain giving vent in sobs to his overcharged heart.

'Well, I had to do so,' said his friend, 'and no one ever took my part.'

'Didn't they? Then what makes you take mine?' He looked up into the face of his protector through his bloodshot eyes.

'Oh, I don't know; cos I like you, I s'pose;' and he returned his look with a smile.

'Do you? do *you* like *me*?' exclaimed Willie, touched by the unexpected reply, and pressing Trelawney's hand as he took hold thereof, and struggled to keep back the rising emotion, now up to the brim, and trickling from his eyes down his swollen cheeks, until, unable further to control himself, he buried his face against Frendzburgh's side, and sobbed outright. By this time they had reached the gate, and as they passed through, Willie, recovering himself a little, said, 'I oughtn't to cry, I know, but I couldn't help it; I didn't think any one liked me at this hateful place.' He had almost gone off again.

'Tush, man, you don't know the boys as well as I do. They are not very loving, I must say,—that's soon knocked out of them here,—but you make one or two of 'em your friend, which I advise you to do as quick as you can for your own sake, and they'll stand by you.' Here they turned the angle of the lane to the left, and, as they proceeded on, met an occasional group of boys, some of whom made their comments on his choice of so small a companion, which they regarded in the light of 'carneying,'—a term that, translated, meant wheedling the 'young 'un' out of any spare change in the shape of treats; whilst others, who did not think so meanly of him, viewed it more in the light of a challenge, implying that the 'young 'un' was now under his protectorate, but which, they very stoutly averred, should not save him if he gave them any of his sauce.

Arrived at the end of the lane, they came to a small thatched cottage within an enclosure, intended for a garden plot, but which, except a small space occupied by cabbage plants, was overrun with rank weeds, ambitious to keep pace with a few sickly sunflowers and tall hollyhocks. On entering the cottage, they were greeted by two sets of boys, for they usually associated

in pairs, who were scarcely visible through the thick odorous fumes issuing from a pancake frying in a well-greased pan on the wood fire on the hearth, for which the second duals were impatiently waiting, their appetites, if possible, augmented by the way in which the first duals were 'going into' theirs, that had just been turned out on to a blue platter, more than one piece whereof was being as quickly returned to the plate as it had left it, it having burnt the mouth into which it had been precipitated.

As the purveyoress of the establishment was too busily engaged with the pancake to return his salutation, Trelawney, to attract her attention, made a further effort in the shape of an order. 'I say, Nanny, let's have a couple of crowdies as soon as you can !'

'Ha' patience, lad, wilta ; tha see hah aw's rowt. Let me set doan t' cake to tha lad,—fust coom, fust hoped. Set tha doan, lads.'

Thus invited, they seated themselves on a couple of chairs, the rush bottoms of which, having been worn out, were replaced by boards. During the process of cooking, Willie had leisure to contemplate the garniture of the room. In one corner was the spinning-wheel, in those days almost invariably found amongst the cottager's furniture ; whilst in the recess by the side of the chimney was the narrow dresser with its shelves, on which were the neatly arranged shining delf of ancient pattern. Some other articles around the room were passed in review, but the boy's attention was attracted to a few glaring pictures nailed to the whitewashed walls, which had formed the study, and elicited the admiration, of the Grumblebys from earliest days. Though not improved by the greasy exhalations that obscured their garish colouring, they still retained enough of their original brilliancy to convey vivid impressions to fresh students. One of them in particular never failed to obtain a more critical examination than the rest. Seated on what had been a green cloud, was an athletic man with bare legs and feet, habited in a large, loose vermilion frock ; his thick, long, amber-coloured hair and beard hung over his uncovered neck. On his lap—though some of the boys contended it was his bosom, they having some indistinct recollection of having heard or read a story about it—reclined a large bushy head, with long beard and moustache of the same amber colour as the other, and looking equally fierce ; this head was the appendage to a large, muscular body, in a dress, or more appro-

priately undress, consisting merely of a pair of tight-fitting blue drawers, reaching from his middle to about midway between his hip and thigh, after the modern style of bathing drawers. Indeed, from the appearance of the surroundings, it looked very much as if he had just come out of a bath, and was drying himself in the blaze of a flame ascending from below, wherein another figure of the same type, but entirely nude, was standing reaching up his arms as though begging to be pulled up, or else prepared to catch the other two in case they fell off the cloud, while at the same time he appeared to be rather uncomfortably situated himself, if the artist's idea could be correctly interpreted, from the way in which he was poised on the top of a black, inky wave, surrounded by the flame aforesaid, which was of a rainbow colour, still conveying the idea of a bath, though a red-hot one. Somewhat lower, and emerging out of the inky cloud, were a couple of black heads, adorned with tufts and horns, and great red eyes; these were vigorously engaged in thrusting hay-forks into the nude figure, which might have accounted for his anxiety to get up higher, only that he did not appear in the least disturbed thereby, nor did it interfere with his contemplation of the parties above him, whilst he was equally indifferent to the importunate entreaties of a sable little creature, who was tendering him a tankard of a blue and yellow mixture, to take a drink thereof. This picture, so bold in conception and rich in colouring, bore the title of 'The Rich Man and Lazarus,' and had not only formed the ground-work of some terrible tales of giant-killers and kindred subjects, but had inspired many a youth with a talent for sketching, as rude imitations thereof might, after some difficulty in the attempt at identification, be seen on the chalked walls and flags of the school premises. Hence, probably, the latent genius of the future artist received its first impulse, and thereby sanctioned the claim of the Grumbleby institution to the credit of its first development.

With such attractions were the walls of Nanny Miller adorned, and might have remained adorned, to fame unknown, but for the far more attractive farinaceous compounds manufactured within those walls, which acted with even a more potent spell on the students at the Hall, than did the mural adornments themselves. What Grumbleby that ever owned twopence, hesitated to transmute it into one of Nanny's productions? It might have been the hunger, for though not the article, it is excellent sauce, but the very memory thereof, after the lapse of so many years,

brings with it the sensations enkindled at the sight of those savoury ingredients, sparkling and crackling, as the floury batter was spread over the oleaginous pan. What pancakes were ever tossed up the chimney so dexterously as were Nanny's?—often to the dismay of the uninitiated, lest they would never come down again; and then, what a renewed sensation, after they did come down, lower side uppermost, caused by the display of the beautiful brown exterior. But the crowdies! Talk of pancakes! why, they were absolutely nothing to the crowdies! Ah, those crowdies! what a nervous twitching of hands, as the iron spoon was grasped, whilst into the bright yellow delf basin with the pale blue border, the tough, adhering mass was shovelled from the saucepan! how adroitly the hole in the centre of the sticky stuff was dug out, and thereupon came, lazily descending from the small mouth of the old stone jar, the splendid thick treacle! And then the flummeries!—but we must forbear, our mouths are running over. Alas, they are the things of the past! with Nanny expired the true art of making pancakes, or concocting crowdies and flummeries, leaving nothing but the vision and imitation behind; for all that is known of the former is that the chief ingredient was flour, and of the latter oatmeal.

By this time the first customers had disposed of their purchases and departed, and Frendzburgh's (the Christian name of Trelawney) and Willie's turn had come. It being the latter's first essay, he found it expedient to occasionally assist the adhering mixture in its descent by a drink of water, as, notwithstanding the aid of the treacle, it had a knack of sticking on the way.

'An whar's the lad throo, Measter Fren? aw've no set eyes on 'm afore. Do'st ta coom fra Lunnun toon, lod?' inquired Nanny, as she seated herself at the end of the table, and wiped her face with her apron.

'Yes, ma'am,' replied Willie.

The old lady put on her specs to take a better survey of the boy, then, laying her hand on his head, wiped the treacle marks off his mouth and kissed him.

'Tha'rt nobbut young, lad, to leave yer daddy and mammy, but happen tha'lt soon be loike t' others. But 'at's ailing tha nozzle?' She twisted his head from side to side whilst she examined the organ named, at present somewhat enlarged and red; then, wetting the corner of her apron with her tongue, commenced wiping what she termed the 'smutch' from his left eye;

but no effect being produced thereby, she exclaimed, 'Whar'st gotten 'at nose an' een?'

'Oh, it's only where one of the boys hit him,' said Trelawney; 'that's nothing.'

'An' tha ca'st 'at nowt! the scallop, to het a moppet like yon! Wha did't?'

'Oh, it was Bangs! it will soon be all right again,—won't it, Wilton?'

'Bangs! ev aw'd sen 'im aw'd ha banged him. 'At's he owen?' She walked over to the door leading into the bed-chamber, and, opening it, looked over the host of scores chalked on the inside thereof, for, like other manufacturing establishments, she was compelled to do business on the credit system.

'Oh, you mustn't be hard on him, Nanny,' expostulated Trelawney; 'they were only fighting.'

'Feytin'—feytin' such a barn as yon! Then aw think the waur o' him, an' aw wonner what tha war dooin' to let 'im.'

'It was all fair,' rejoined Frendzburgh, who felt that it was due to Bangs that he should not be damaged in the matter, as any refusal of further credit would seriously affect that student's stomach.

'Deed, aw see nowt fair in't. Is tha noas soar, ma poar lamb?' said the old lady, at the same time taking hold of it with her finger and thumb.

'Oh!' exclaimed the boy, wincing under the friendly treatment.

'Th' taistril, to knock his neiv agen tha bonny noas! Aw'll put summat to't at'll do't good, barn.' She took a gallipot from off one of the dresser shelves, and hooked out on the top of her finger a small *taste* of ointment composed of grease and treacle, which she rubbed on his wounded nasal, declaring, on the completion thereof, that 'it would soon be the better of that.'

In the curative properties of this emollient Mrs. Miller had implicit faith, and, when permitted by the perverse boys of the Academy to apply it externally, but which they invariably resisted, it was always very liberally applied to the damaged member. There was a time, however, when it had been in greater repute, and was in extensive use as a medicine for *internal* ailments, its effects being marvellous in all cases of derangement of the inner man. In this mode of its application the boys had even greater faith in its virtues than Nanny herself, and the applications for another spoonful by the same patient, the last having only partially relieved the complaint, were

numerous. It was no unusual occurrence for half-a-dozen boys to become suddenly griped whilst wandering over the grounds, and thereupon to set off in an exciting race, so as to arrive at the dispensary first, in order to obtain the largest spoonful, as it was noticed they diminished in quantity according to the number of applicants. To what extent this might have been carried is uncertain, especially when the invalids became fully aware that two-thirds of the sedative, or tonic, or whatever other quality it possessed, was pure treacle, the other third being goose grease, or, when that was not to be had, hog's lard. But, alarmed at the singularly demoralized state of the Grumbleby stomachs, the old lady conferred thereon with one of her neighbours; whereupon the rather sceptical neighbour suggested that the singularity might be a speciality that could only be radically cured by combining some more potent ingredient with the treacle, and thereupon recommended brimstone for that purpose, it being much in vogue in these parts. At first Mrs. Miller felt scandalized at such presumption in instructing her in the mode of treating juvenile complaints, but eventually, though still affecting to ignore any such interference, she essayed the experiment, and it was remarkable how speedily it operated, and how from that time forth the cases requiring treatment diminished. In less than a week the troubled insides were all reduced to a normal condition, and thenceforth the ointment was confined to external applications, and that only seldom, the former preference therefor having been succeeded by as great an aversion.

It being a very warm day, the flies that swarmed in the garden during the earlier part thereof, according to custom, had retired to the cottage, the savoury exhalations through the open door and window being an additional incentive to their availing themselves of its shade. As a consequence, the very tempting state of Willie's nose provoked an assault thereon, which, though not after the same mode as Bangs', yet was exceedingly irritating, and occasioned his keeping up a defensive warfare, until eventually, in desperation, on returning to the school he rid himself of their pertinacity, by ridding his nose of any further inducement to continue it. Before he left the cottage, Trelawney opened an account with the proprietress on behalf of his young friend, readily accorded, and thenceforth abundantly enjoyed, the regulated allowance not unfrequently augmented by an extra quantity both of the farinaceous and the saccharine components.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HOLIDAY.

IT was a lovely morning; its warm breath, perfumed by the neighbouring clover fields and the sweet-scented grasses, over which it moved so gently as scarcely to ruffle a blade or a stalk, came floating even into the inodorous school-room. Not a ripple on the little beck, now purling lazily along its narrowed channel, nor a cloud in the ambient sky. Even the birds, that one after the other, or in blended unison, had at an earlier hour warbled their morning orisons, had ceased to carol, or had returned so to do amongst the sheltering leaves of plantations and distant groves. The rooks, too, with distended, drooping wings, were leisurely promenading the turnip fields in search of grub and worm; whilst the old corvine, perched on the topmost bough of a shady elm, where he kept watch and ward, scarcely raised his voice to salute the retiring daw, who sailed slowly by with his provender-laden beak, to be dropped into the capacious maw of his unfledged progeny. The cattle were grazing towards the shortening shadow of the spreading oak, and the sheep to the umbrageous hedgerow, to browse along its banks and in the ditches, here and there leaving traces of their course by a woolly lock, torn from their backs by some ruthless bramble. Insects were reposing on the under-side of the leaves, or, vivified into stronger life, were coursing one another in eddying whirls; whilst others, basking in the sun, sat motionless, save when they occasionally rubbed their hot toes, or sharpened their dulling mandibles, preparatory to a meditated attack on an approaching bovine.

The boys were scattered around the premises: some, on their backs, might be seen reclining at full length under the scorching blaze of the rising sun, in a listless somnolent state,—one or two of whom, however, less salamandrine than the rest, suddenly

rose and escaped to the shady side of the walls, along which others were seated or leaning against; a few were taking advantage of the shelter afforded by the rookery; whilst others, again, had retired to the plantation side, but within hail. Even the officials must have been affected by the enervating state of the atmosphere, for it was some time past the usual hour for 'all in,' possibly delayed in anticipation of what was about to take place.

Around the back door of the passage before described as leading to the boys' bed-room stairs, as also to the parlour wherein the three new boys took their first breakfast, several boys were congregated, engaged in something of more than ordinary interest. Amongst them were Willie and his two fellow-travellers, who were being initiated into some mystery, and forcibly placed in the front of the rest.

Presently one of the bigger boys crept cautiously into the passage, but in another second came rushing out, and caused the whole *posse* to retreat round the corner, or behind some place of concealment; but as nothing else appeared, soon a head projected from behind the pig barrel, and whispered, 'What was it, Knapp? ain't he alone?'

'Yes, he's alone, but a' thawt a' heerd Grippy coming.'

'Oh, you fool, Grippy's in the kitchen.'

Thereupon the boys, one after the other, emerged from their hiding-place and reassembled around the door, and entered the passage. At the suggestion of the rest, Knapp took off his boots, and crept cautiously to the end thereof, and was about to peep round into the parlour, when a footstep was heard, and another stampede was commenced, but this time arrested before they had again scattered. It was Milly, who was crossing the dark hall to the stairs, but, attracted by the noise, stopped, and, seeing herself beckoned by Knapp, went over to him. Comprehending the boys' intention, at their request she went into the room, and returned and informed them that the old schoolmaster was all alone, but was asleep with a handkerchief over his face, after which she retired out of sight, but where she could be witness to the proceedings.

'Now then, lads!' said Bangs; 'come here, you Wilton, and you two other chaps. Now mind you keep't up. Knock!' Tap, tap, went Willie's fist against the half-open door, and then a pin might have been heard drop.

'Knock louder!' whispered two or three next him. Another

tap, tap ; still no response. 'Give a good loud 'un, you t'other chaps ! rap, can't ye?—hard.'

Whereupon the three boys simultaneously knocked, and Knapp approached and looked through the open door into the room, and then drew back on his toes, and informed them that 'the old master had woke up.'

'Bless me ! what was that?' Mr. Kearas looked round the room. 'Thought I heard something.' As he saw nothing, he was about to rearrange his handkerchief over his head, when the knocking was repeated.

'Who's that? After listening a few seconds, Mr. Kearas rose and limped over to the door, the cause of his limping being that one of his legs had indulged in a nap too, but took longer to come to an *understanding* than its head. As Mr. Kearas opened the door to its full extent, he was met by the deputation, hats in hand,—at least those who had any,—and who instantly surrounded him. 'Bless me ! what's a matter? Arn't ye all in school yet? Where's Mr. Grippem?'

'Now, Wilton, now, you fellows, go on, can't ye?'

'Please, sir, may we have a holiday?' exclaimed the three indicated.

'Eh ! holiday ! why, what for? Who are you?' addressing the three pleaders.

'Please, sir, they're the last new boys, and we ain't had no holidays,' said Bangs.

'Be off, every man-jack ! What do you want with a holiday?' The tone and manner of the old schoolmaster was sufficiently assuring to encourage the whole deputation, and now all chimed in,—'Please, sir, give us a holiday !' 'Ah, give us a holiday !' 'Ah, do, sir ;' 'Please, sir ;' 'Do, sir.'

'What should I give you a holiday for? Be off, you scaramouches !'

'For the new boys ;' 'The new boys ;' 'Never gied us one for tha new boys ;' 'Oh, do now !'

As Mr. Kearas' eye caught Willie's pleading glance, the frown that he had been vainly endeavouring to assume quite relaxed into a smile, a sign well understood by the anthropologists of the Academy, who immediately seized him by hands, arms, buttons, and coat-tails, and patted and coaxed him in a most endearing manner. Mr. Kearas was not proof against this affectionate ebullition: he was yielding fast, but made one more effort, lest he should be thought to give in too easily ; but what he said was drowned

in the pleadings and tuggings of his attached family, who were taking advantage of so rare an opportunity of testifying how much they loved him. As Mr. Kearas stood in some jeopardy of losing his balance, he conceived the time had come when he could with honour—not to speak of safety to himself—signify his assent to a request so irresistibly urged, and thereupon shouted out, 'Holiday, boys! let go, let go!' The latter words were not needed: the hold was relaxed, and in an instant they were tumbling over one another as they rushed out, shouting at the top of their voices, 'Holiday, holiday, holiday!'—an announcement that was caught up, and echoed and re-echoed over playground and plantation, and brought every straggler to the coterie by whom it was being proclaimed, and who were affording indubitable evidence of the reality to the excited school, as fast as the breathless boys came up.

The next hour was occupied in planning excursions; and leave having been duly obtained, soon, issuing from the premises, were groups, varying in number from two to seven or eight, some in the direction of 'Trough Carr,' some to the 'Seven Shepherds,' others to 'Catcastle' woods, and some few to the 'Moor.'

Amongst those selecting the last-named for their holiday ramble were Frendzburgh and Willie, who since the fight had been often together; the boy, too, who had assisted Frendzburgh at the beck on that occasion, obtained leave to be of the number; and with some others, a party of seven started off, as merry as the merriest. Forgetful of all grief or trouble, they gambolled along, gabbling, shouting, and laughing. The boundary wall into the 'Calf Garth' leaped, they were off in a race to see who should first jump the next fence, separating the latter field from the 'Long Close;' tumbling, climbing, and scrambling over on to the green sward, they were soon hieing along the path by the hedge side, until, nearing the small planked bridge across the creek that flowed towards the beck, the younger started off on another run, and let themselves down, one after the other, into the shallow stream, to the disturbance of a cloud of midges gyrating with ceaseless rapidity in the shade. Splashing through the water, they climbed up the bank, and another race for a distant gate that lay in their road ensued, but in which they were arrested half-way by the shouts of one of their number, whose attention had been caught by something in the ditch, and whereat they scampered back to join in the examination thereof; but each arrival iterating the exclamation of his predecessor, and with

affected contempt declare it to be nothing. 'Didn't he ever see a hedgehog before?' Thereupon an examination with the aid of sticks and feet takes place, until all have satisfied their curiosity, and again come to the conclusion that it's nothing, only a dead hedgehog that somebody has killed, and, to make up for lost time, start off again with speed to overtake Frendzburgh and another boy, who had taken a short cut across the next field, and to come up with whom they creep through a gap, where they startle some sheep, that take to their heels, until, reaching a safe distance, they turn round and shake their sheepy heads, or stamp their feet as the timid lambs crouch by their side.

Ascending the gradually rising ground, they halt to look around, when, espying a turnip field close by, they simultaneously spread themselves, and commence to forage amongst the Swedish esculents, it being their only chance of provision until they reach home in time for their supper. But on they speed, chasing butterflies, stoning birds, killing a snake, and many other achievements, until finally, after indulging successively in a swing on the gate, they cross a scrubby, stony piece of ground, and leap with one hand over a broken stile into the moor, whence, at some distance, they see their proposed place of rendezvous during the day's wandering. It was an old ruin, whereof but little was standing, surrounded by a dilapidated wall, in which were large gaps. Making their way thereto, on arriving within its area they threw themselves down to rest under the shelter of an old yew tree, growing close to one of the walls. Of the history of this solitary dwelling they were ignorant, nor could it be surmised why so lonely a spot had been selected for a residence, except upon the schoolboy tradition that it was once the headquarters of freebooters, though others averred it had centuries ago been a loyal stronghold that had challenged the guns of the Ironsides, in corroboration of which they pointed to the distant castle of Bowes, on the other side of the Greta, formerly belonging to the house of Richmond, also in ruins, but then in a much less dilapidated condition than at the present day, and which, they averred, owed its destruction to the same cause.

The beautiful prospect was so novel to Willie, that he could not refrain from standing on the wall and looking in the direction of the river. Before him was an extensive plain, divided off into arable fields, meadows, and pastures by stone walls or hedges, studded with elm and yew, fir and oak; shelving in undulating broken slopes until it reached the river, whose serpentine

course could be traced for some distance in a thin line, through a picturesque country, until it passed a high and precipitous bank. In this was a cave, that time had enlarged, and which was held to be the entrance to a subterranean passage leading to the castle, whereby its inmates, in perilous times, obtained access or egress unknown to besiegers or other foes. A little further on, the river widened, until it fell, in a broad irregular sheet of water, over a rocky perpendicular height foaming into a basin, whence, at a lower level, it continued its course with accelerated speed past the Grumbleby plantation. In the neighbourhood of the fall, on the opposite side to the plantation, was a cotton and a flour mill, the propelling power of which was obtained by diverting a stream along an aqueduct.

Save here and there a stack of hay, or corn, or a solitary barn, there were no signs of domestic life; and a stillness reigned, only interrupted by the occasional lowing of some distant cattle, or the hasty flight of some disturbed covey of grouse or flock of starlings. The country on the other side of the ruin was wild and dreary, stretching far away, until closed in by woods or hills, where all was shaded in dark outline.

But too accustomed to nature to feel interested in any particular contemplation thereof, the boys' attention was soon engrossed by more consonant subjects.

'Aw say, Mount,' said Mape Harfagr, the boy who had assisted at Willie's ablution on the day of his encounter with Bangs, 'tha mind'st toime when we met t' lads doan at t' Sev'n Shep'rds?' This memory appeared to have been conjured up by his having mounted the wall by the side of Willie, and looking in the direction of the place named. 'Aw 'm noan feared thay'll want moar nor we gied 'em; on'y aw woodunt loike thay'd coom on ma be misen, ivver.'

'I b'lieve ye! Didn't Aslem pitch into 'em, though?' replied Mount.

'Ah! bud he soon found his match. Yon big sandy fellow in the corduroys would ha' made punkins on him in no time, if Knapp hadn't helped.' This was uttered by a boy evidently no friend of Aslem's.

'I'd like to ha' seen him get a good threshing, he's allus bouncing it over somebody; on'y I wouldn't like they boys to do 't, nother.'

'No, nor I. What a lark,'—here the boy lowered his voice lest he should be overheard by Trelawney, who had risen and

gone over to the other side of the enclosure, followed by Willie,—
'if he'd only tackle Fren!'

'Fren! he tackle Fren! Why, Fren 'ud lick him with one hand.'

'I b'leeve ye! See how funky he were that day he hit Wilton in school, when he saw Trelawney gowling at him at t' other end of the desk.'

With the whole of this party it was apparent Aslem was no favourite. In addition to what has already been said of him, it may be added that, although the acknowledged leader and dictator, in which he was generally supported by the other big boys, he had never yet come into actual collision with Frendzburgh, who, though taller, was not so stout or so heavy in build, yet in muscle was more than a match for the other. Though unwilling to assent, or allow it to be thought that he doubted his own superiority over Trelawney, he was yet wise enough to avoid any causes of collision, and consequently had very little intercourse with him. Of a generous, easy temper, it was not at all probable that Frendzburgh would court any such occasion; and, except in very rare instances, when stepping forward to protect some harshly-used younger lad (the elders he allowed to fight their own battles), he never interfered. However, such interposition was sufficient to draw on him the ill-will of Aslem and the larger boys, against whose tyranny he became a recognised defender. This unselfish conduct was not always requited by those benefited as it deserved, as he often endured impertinence and slights that the other big boys would not have tolerated, but which they enjoyed, asserting it served him right for taking their parts.

'Lads,' said Trelawney, crossing over to the group, whose conversation ceased as he approached, 'what will we do now?'

'Oh, let's go back for some turnips,—I feel peckish,' said one; which was immediately taken up by the rest, and a disposition to follow up the suggestion manifested.

'Wait a minute,—it's too far. Hungry, Wilton?'

Willie smiled; the question was a superfluous one, for who was not hungry? it was the unexceptional condition of all Grumblebys.

'Let's look for berries,' exclaimed Mount; 'And bird's eggs,' added Trotter;—suggestions that were immediately responded to by the rest, and, donning their jackets, which had been thrown aside on their arrival at the enclosure, they arranged to re-assemble at the same place, and were quickly scattered over the

dark brown moor, tearing their legs amongst the yellow furze, or sprawling over the numerous tufts and hummocks in search of the green wortle or blaberries, or any other edible that came to hand. It was not long before none was within hail of the other, at times led on in the eager chase after some weasel, or other animal or reptile.

Enticed by the artifices of an apparently broken-winged moorhen, Willie, after a lengthened pursuit, had the mortification to see it suddenly rise and fly off, screaming in derision as it went, 'Pe-wit, pe-wit!' Tired out, he threw himself down amongst the furze to gather the tway blade and crake berries, until, overcome by lassitude, he fell asleep in a hollow.

At length, wearied and pressed by the cravings of hungry stomachs, that had been tantalized by an occasional green berry, or some leaves of sour sorrel or juicy dock-root, the party began instinctively to retrace their steps towards the appointed place. Willie, however, more exhausted than the rest, being unaccustomed to such exhilarating exercise, still slumbered in his 'sleepy hollow,' and might have continued some time longer, had he not been aroused by a violent shake, which caused him to start to his feet.

'Hold on to him!' shouted two or three voices, and he found himself in the grasp of a boy much larger than himself; and thereupon, sufficiently awake, saw that he was surrounded by several big boys, all in their appearance bearing a close resemblance to his schoolmates.

Alarmed at his position, his first surmise was that these were the kidnappers of whom such wonderful tales were current at the Hall, and whom Grumbleby tradition domiciled in caves, and among ruins on the moor, their peculiar amusement or business consisting in entrapping small boys, and disposing of them in some way unknown, as none ever escaped to tell.

'Who are you?' demanded one, who appeared to be the ringleader, as he stepped up to him, and took him out of the grasp of the other.

'Willie Wilton, sir,' replied the frightened boy.

'Where did you come from?'

'From—from'—and he turned his head to discover the ruins, intending to point them out, when he became sensible that he was in some secluded place, as his head was below the top of the hollow, and he at once concluded that he was in the kidnappers' cave. Becoming more alarmed, he stammered out,

'Please let me go, sir,' and looked pleadingly into his captor's face.

'Hold tha jaw, young un, can't ye, and tell us where ye coom'd throo,' exclaimed one of the boys, at the same time gripping his arm so tight as to cause him to shrink with the pain; whereat the ringleader, in whose hold he had been detained, shook him, bidding him stand still, and repeated his question, 'Who do ye belong to, young un? speak, or aw'll spiflicate you.'

'To—to Auntie,' stammered out the confused boy, whereat they all indulged in a hearty laugh.

'Oh, Auntie!—to Auntie, do ye? How's Auntie, dear? How coom she to unpin you from her apron so soon?' And then several very affectionate inquiries were made as to the state of Auntie's health, and if she'd given him any lollipops lately, each of which remarks occasioned a renewed burst.

'Well, may I go now?' said the boy, in his most pleading manner.

'Go? noa, I count not. Do ye live up at Bowes?'

'Bowes! where's that?—oh, in the town? Yes—no—not in the town.'

'Well, where *do* you live? If you don't tell, aw'll mash thee.'

'Why, I live at the school.'

At the mention of school the interest of the company in their prisoner appeared to be much increased.

'What school—Squeers?'

'No, Mr. Kearas.'

'Kearas! one o' Kearas' boys!' exclaimed the youths together, and then crowded round him with great delight. 'An' you're a young Queerass! O golly!'

'Aw know'd he wur,' chimed in one,—'aw know'd he wur one o' thay chaps that fought us at Shepherds.'

'No, I'm not,' exclaimed Willie earnestly, 'indeed I'm not.'

'None o' yer hanged lies, you cub, or aw'll wallop ye mysel.'

'I never was there in all my life. I'm a new boy.'

'Ef tha doan't hod tha tongue, aw'll bray thee.' He raised his hand to strike him.

'Don't kill him yet,' said the big boy, winking at the other, 'till we hear more about him.' Then, addressing Willie, 'How came ye here now?—mind, no more lies. Are there any more Kearas lads about?'

'Yes,' said Willie, 'a good many,'—in the fond hope that this intelligence might lead to his release.

'Oh, there are! Just look round,' said their leader; whereupon they ran up to the brow of the hollow, and looked all round, but reported there was not a boy to be seen.

'So you see you told a whacker to begin with. What'll we do with him?'

'Let's take his clothes off, and carry him away,' said one.

'No, gie him a good tanning, and send him with our compliments to old Kearas, and say we'll serve 'em all so 'fore we've done.'

'Let's throw him into the old lime-pit,' chimed in a third.

'Oh, ah, so we will!' responded the whole lot.

'Oh, pray don't,' said Willie, as he fell on his knees; 'oh, pray don't beat me, or take my clothes away. Anything you like, only don't do that.'

'Take hold of his legs and arms,' cried the leader; and in another second they were on their way to the lime-pit, drowning Willie's entreaties and cries by their threats and merriment.

As the kiln was at some distance, and, should there be any truth in the boy's assertion that there were companions with him, they might be discovered whilst crossing the moor, they kept a sharp look-out, relieving one another of their load by turns. Willie closed his eyes that he might not witness their grimaces, and, in the hope that they would come in contact with his schoolfellows before they had carried their purpose into execution, he resigned himself quietly to their proceedings. Once his heart sank, as, on standing him down whilst effecting the relief in carrying him, he became aware that they were deviating from the direction of the ruins, but at once raising his thoughts to those heavens towards which his face was turned, there came to him the memory of the teaching of happier times, and he breathed a fervent petition that he might be remembered by Him whom he was taught to trust and love, and there stole over him a calm that reassured his troubled heart.

'Oh, the pit's too far, and it's getting late,' said one of the boys, as they set Willie down, and halted for a change.

'Yes; we shan't be home in time for supper, an' I'm fearful hungry.'

These assertions met with a general approval, and, after a few minutes' further deliberation, it was proposed to throw him into the sand-hole, which was not so far, and lay, as Willie learned, on the other side of the ruins, and, as they stated, would be on their way home. Resuming their burden, they accordingly altered their course in the direction indicated.

All the Grumblebies with the exception of Willie had arrived at the rendezvous, and were impatiently awaiting his appearance to start homeward. At last, tired of waiting, Frendzburgh intimated his intention of going in search of him, and requested the boys to spread themselves in a line at a good distance, so that he might be the more readily discovered. One or two objected that it was too late, and suggested to leave the little jackass to find his own way, and that would teach him another time. This was only in accordance with the established mode of teaching at the Academy,—a very sure if not safe mode, the impression thereby made being, as a mnemonic, very lasting. But Trelawney's interest in his *protégé* was too real to listen to such counsel, and, strongly backed by Mape, he was about to exact compliance with his wish, when one of the boys, who, in the shade of that portion of the old building still standing, had climbed on to the top of some rubbish, as he looked over the moor, announced that he saw a lot of big fellows going away to the right. Running over to the wall in the direction pointed out, the procession was seen, but too distant to distinguish its nature.

'Don't move, boys,' said Frendzburgh, as the rest were running over to the other end to get a better view.

'It's the kidnappers,' said one of the boys, as he edged nearer the rest.

'Ah, an' they've kidnapped Wilton, eh?' whereat each boy looked at the other, and a pause ensued. It was just then that the distant group had halted to decide on changing their route. The Grumblebies crept close to the wall, and strained their sight to watch their movements.

'Hadn't we better go?—it's getting late,' said one of the more timid. 'I daresay Willie's gone home.'

'See,' said Mape, whose eyes were keener than the rest, 'they're dregging summut, and coming this way now.'

'Let's go. Are we goin' to stay here all night? Let's run, lads,' said the timid boy.

'Stay where you are,' said Frendz, in an authoritative voice. 'Keep down, you Mount,' the boy in his eagerness having commenced climbing on the wall for a better view; whereupon, descending too hastily, several of the stones give way, and a rattling noise ensued, followed by the flight across the enclosure of a weasel, that in a second glided into a hole in the wall.

'Down, down, lads, and hide behind yon stack,' said Frendz-

burgh, as he led the way in a crouching posture, followed by the rest. 'Don't say a word.' They all lay close to the old buttress, 'Stay here,' continued he; and thereupon, creeping on all fours, he went over to a high part of the wall, sufficiently high to allow him to stand up without being seen, and then looked through a hole therein.

The advancing cavalcade had halted, and appeared to be in consultation. Presently two of their number were cautiously approaching the ruins, whilst the rest seated themselves on the ground, after depositing something in their midst; in doing so, however, Frendzburgh's keen glance had detected that the something was small, alive, and under restraint. Thereupon it immediately occurred to him that it was Willie; in which case, for some reason a prisoner, he had been forced into the confession that his companions were likely to be found at this spot,—an idea that was confirmed by the increased caution shown by the approaching boys, who were making for a large gap, formerly a gateway to the enclosure.

'Don't move nor speak, boys,' said Trelawney; 'they're near;' and he crept over to a projection where he could keep his eye on them without being seen.

Advancing very slowly, the two scouts halted at the gap, then entered a few paces, and again halted. Two or three of the stones that had been dislodged when the rest fell, as before mentioned, came rattling down, whereat the two turned and ran with great speed towards their companions, who at the same time jumped up, alarmed at this precipitate action; but, finding no one following, nor perceiving any cause for their fright, save, as they assumed, the casual falling of the stones of the tumble-down walls, the two stopped, and, mustering courage, returned again to their former position, and made a rapid survey of the interior, during which the Grumblebies crouched with bated breath behind the covert of the buttress.

Hastening back to the main body, they reported the coast all clear, whereupon the *cortège* fell into line, and, preceded by the same two, made towards the enclosure. Frendzburgh at his previous glance had been satisfied that they were not villagers, but were undoubtedly boys from one of the rival educational establishments, who, from their wary conduct, were on some evil errand. In order, therefore, to be prepared, he immediately arranged his companions along the inside of the wall, armed with stones, ready to defend themselves or take such action as on

nearer approach might appear advisable. In size, if not in number, the outsiders were more than a match for his little band, who were junior lads, and therefore, in any hand-to-hand encounter, were sure to be worsted; but by preventing their approach, he might succeed in making them believe they were more formidable than they were. And if, as he had surmised, Willie was in their hands, by a timely sortie of himself and Harfagr he hoped to rescue him, and, on retreating to the ruins, by showers of stones to put some of the assailants *hors-de-combat*, or keep them at bay. He had scarcely completed his arrangements, when Harfagr, who had taken Trelawney's place at the hole in the wall, announced that three boys only were approaching, and immediately afterwards, that one of them was Willie, who was being led between the other two, a bandage tied round his mouth, doubtless to prevent his giving any alarm.

'At's Woolton! 'at's Woolton!' exclaimed Harfagr, unable to suppress his emotion. 'Dang ma owd shoon, bud aw'll pitch into 'em!' and was about to hurl a stone at the boys, but that Frendzburgh forcibly restrained him. Just then a shout was heard from the main body, urging those in charge of the prisoner to make haste, as it was getting late, and to meet them at the foot of a meadow near the Greta; saying which, they angled off to a pathway, and were on their way in the direction named. This favourable movement caused Frendzburgh to change his intention of a sortie into an ambuscade, and, directing the boys to return to their hiding-place, they were instructed to remain quiet until the three were well in, and then, following him, to rush upon and overpower them. But once more he was at fault, and had to change his tactics. The rustling of approaching feet amongst the furze and dried grass warned them that the three had arrived at the gap, and with some difficulty the excited boys were kept from rushing out of their covert. Presently the sounds were renewed, but grew fainter and less distinct. Frendzburgh rose and looked cautiously towards the gap to ascertain the cause, but there was no one there. Stepping quietly over thereto, and looking out, he saw they were going along the outside of the wall. Signalling his little band to follow, he crept quickly over to the other end, and sprang with his companions over the wall at the moment they turned the corner. The escort was paralyzed, and captured without the least resistance.

Willie, whose nerves had been greatly shattered by what he had undergone, uttered a feeble cry and fell down, overcome by

the reaction. Bidding Mape hold on to the boy the two had seized, Frendzburgh ran to his assistance; in an instant the prisoner wrested himself out of Harfagr's grasp and was off, pursued by Harfagr and another, but whom he soon out-distanced, and compelled to give up the chase and return to their remaining captive, who had been hauled into the enclosure, whither also Willie had been conveyed.

As the escaped boy came running towards them in great trepidation, and alone, the first thought of his companions, as he came in sight, was that they were being pursued by a force outnumbering their own, and, without awaiting the arrival of the other, whose shouts to stop only tended to accelerate their speed, they never halted until they gained a place of shelter, where they remained until rejoined by the fugitive.

On learning the state of matters, after a council of war, it was decided to return and endeavour to rescue their other comrade. Upon reaching the ruins, they made a disposition of their force as though with the design of storming the fortress; but as their companion's fears had caused him to greatly exaggerate the strength of the garrison, they finally concluded it would be wise first, if possible, to ascertain the disposition of those within. This design, however, was defeated by the party behind the walls keeping up a continuous fire from different parts, in order to convey the idea of the strength within the fort being at least equal to that without; and as this compelled the outsiders to keep at some distance, they at length resolved on a parley, and one of their number advanced, with a hat raised on a stick as a flag of truce.

Being the largest boy, Trelawney, by way of impressing the attacking party, went out to meet him, when he learned that, on their comrade being delivered up, the investing party were willing to retire, intimating at the same time that nothing but the lateness of the hour would have induced them to withdraw on such easy terms. Without appearing to appreciate such forbearance, Frendzburgh, glad to come off so easily, as well as instigated by the same motive, after some show of reluctance, consented, and ordered the captive to be given up,—unable, however, to prevent his receiving a ratification of the treaty by two or three impressive salutes on his retiring person, as attestations of the appreciation of the kind intentions of the besiegers, as well as an acknowledgment of their treatment of Willie. This mode of procedure, though it occasioned an

accelerated pace on his release from the custody of his captors, was by no means satisfactory to the boy himself, for, on reaching a safe distance, he turned about and made sundry valorous gesticulations of a threatening and derogatory nature, not at all in keeping with his humble suppliant manner whilst a prisoner.

Vowing vengeance the first time they could lay hands on any of them or their schoolmates, the Pshawbys—for so they announced themselves to be—hurried off towards their school, which lay at some distance farther than the Hall.

As Willie was too weak to walk, it was arranged that he should be carried on the backs of the other boys by turns, which was done, although, greatly overrating his powers, Mape Harfagr at first declared he would carry him all the way himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

COMPETITION IN FIELD AND FLOOD.

COMPETITION, doubtless a powerful stimulant in any enterprise, has of recent date, and with avowed results, been introduced into the educational arena in a new form. At the close of his academical training, every graduate looking to official or public employ has to take his place and chance side by side with candidates from rival competing academies, whose claim henceforth to superiority over each other, will be the *prestige* resulting from the larger number of successful pupils they may turn out, and whose fitness or unfitness (relatively), at the close of the exciting race has thus been arbitrarily determined. Without venturing an opinion on the wisdom of relying confidently on such a motor, possibly tending, in many cases, to an attenuated mental development, and subjecting its object to the danger of a prematurity of intellect, as well as tension to which the brain-power may be unequal, it is only referred to in this place, as offering another illustration of the slow advance that a novel but grand idea must make, in order to its being overtaken by a more slowly-advancing recognition or appreciation; for in this very particular the precedent intelligence that pervaded the institutions under review in these pages is noteworthy, and demands, though late, the admission that the original conception and working out of the aforesaid idea must be credited to those establishments; whence, after the lapse of years (during which, in common with other excellences, it has—presumably from jealousy of its origin—been neglected and despised), eventually it has descended to the modern scholastic forum,—one evidence, amongst many, of the high standard of the curriculum of the unique educational *depôts* congregated in the classic region of the Greta. And in boldly avowing thus much, it must still further be claimed that the

academic thought of the present day has not yet grasped the idea in its completeness,—at least, as conceived and carried out in these renowned schools,—inasmuch as, with an amusing rivalry to turn out the competitor for position by a show of large attainments, the schoolmen of the present day look to the *future* object of competition, the struggle for which only commences at the *conclusion* of the pupil's educational course,—the actual test oftener occurring some time subsequent to the academician leaving his *alma mater*, when, for the first time, he proves the quality of his improved cram. On the contrary, in these secluded halls it was no phantom, luring on to a possible contingency, but an everyday present realization; the theoretical was merged in the practical, sternly and tangibly taught. Take one example of the many that could be adduced. Amongst other branches of *applied* science, that of agriculture (without the chemistry) occupied an important place at these seminaries. In this particular course the rivalry ran high, but at the present juncture Grumbleby claimed to stand at the head; however, the competition was fierce, and it became a mighty struggle to hold its own with the Pshawbys, to whom report at one time adjudged the palm,—at least in that division of the science whereby the grasses, termed timothy, clover, vetches, and the like, were converted by the action of heat into a dry staple designated hay, and whence the mode of conversion was termed 'hay-making.' The effect of this rivalry on the competing institutions was most perceptible. Was it reported that the Pshawbys had gone through a manipulation whereby the grass of a field, equal in extent to the Long Close, had parted with its superabundant hydrogen to an amount entitling it to be classed under the term hay, and housed it in five days and a half?—the Grumbletonians did an equal quantity in five days and three eighths; whilst the Squeers and Cutherstones were nowhere. By this single illustration it can be surmised how superior was their mode of tuition to all others. The competition was reciprocal,—beneficial to the fame of the establishments, of *especial advantage* to the boys, and very much to the profit of the masters, who generously yielded up their splendid meadows, without any extra charge, for this practical initiation into a science having so important a *bearing* on the *future* of the pupils.

Then there were the physical advantages to be taken into account. Occurring as this branch of study always did in the

long, hot, broiling days, and occupying the whole time, from early morning to late night, for weeks, it called forth the powers of endurance, showing of what stuff each boy was made, always perceptible in a marked degree at the termination of the course. True, one here and there did succumb, the impact causing a deterioration of the animal organism, until it not inaptly resembled a well-dried mummy; but its general effect as a deterrent was undoubted, as it operated effectually in restraining all undue tendency to obesity, a state of body which Mr. Kearas, senior,—and he was an experienced authority,—assured them was by no means desirable. *Ergo*, given a large quantity of green herbage to convert into dry, apart from the proficiency attained, on the completion of the task the physical was about on a par with the mental, further maintained, as the season advanced, by stone-picking; which art consisted in gathering up such surplus large stones as the plough turned up, or as, after their previous distribution of the manure over the meadow, the students found to have been mingled with that pleasant compost.

As with the athletes of old, proficiency was only attained by hard and vigorous training, best judged by contrasting the incipient efforts of the tyro with the more skilful adept. The instruction took place under the Argus eyes of Messrs. Grippem and Shadd, with the occasional supervision of the junior Kearas; and under such instructors they rapidly progressed in the art of strewing, raking, shaking out, cocking, loading, unloading, and stacking. Riding back to the field in the empty cart required no teaching. There was a tendency in the weaker to exhaustion or giddiness, or to secreting themselves under a hay-cock; whilst others, overheated, hastened to the beck, and imbibed until they trembled with chills; others, again, were smitten down by what was termed hay-fever;—but these were not considered of further account than as they exacted too great a demand on the time and electuaries of the household physician. In the manuring division there were some exceptional deviations from the regular mode; indeed, the exceptions, it must be confessed, were greater than the rule, arising partly from laxity in insisting upon its being strictly observed. This laxity amounted to a confession of deficiency of knowledge in mechanics; though it is only fair to allow that it is not every usher, or master either, that can instruct a small boy, of the size of Willie Wilton, how to lift a large-sized three-pronged dung-fork, with a load therein of about the same avoirdupois as

himself, and that with the same facility as a sturdy labourer would lift it. The consequence was, that the majority of the boys were compelled to resort to their hands, and to carry off, for distribution throughout the field, the savoury loads in armfuls. We dare not dwell on the numerous theories and devices that arise out of such teachings, and which were put into daily practice, lest we exhaust the patience of the reader by their relation; suffice it, *they were exhaustless*. Enough has been advanced to attest the superiority claimed for these much-abused seats of learning, over the modern institutions that have *succeeded* them.

It was at the close of one of those hot, glowing days above referred to, during which the Grumblebys had been employed in hay-making. Every tuft of clover was crumbling to dust, and every stalk of timothy appeared to have heated into a red-hot wire; and fork and rake handles had become more than usually blistering to the dried, parched hands. Men and horses, exhausted by the extra pressure in order to house a field of hay before the bursting of an approaching thunder-storm, but which had passed over to discharge itself in some distant locality, were halting, or proceeding at an unusually leisurely rate in carting the remainder, which, without the same exertion, would not be got in that day. As the indications were that rain was not many hours distant, orders were issued that no relaxation of energy should occur in the effort to clear the field. But a spirit of irritation had been cropping up amongst the boys, displaying itself first in their ungracious conduct to each other; until, completely prostrated by their enforced labour under the blazing sun, it took a more ominous form, and there were signs of what in these days is termed a strike. First, two or three of the bigger boys threw down the wooden forks and rakes, and signified to the men that they would not work any more, and, in defiance of coaxing or threats, retired to the shade of the hay-cocks yet in the field; the example was contagious, and as by concert, though in reality by irresistible sympathy, in five minutes every boy had disappeared to similar retreats. Although a very uncommon proceeding, it was not a solecism, and had been known to manifest itself at other establishments in similar cases of overtaxed energies. On such occasions, prudence stepped in to the relief of authority; taught by previous experience, it was deemed wiser to humour than to coerce sixty or seventy boys, whose exasperated temper might, if the additional straw were

added to the load, cause an outbreak that, under such provocation, might not be quelled without some disastrous results.

Mr. Grippem, whose penetration was keen, had seen the incipient tokens, and was prepared; he accordingly kept aloof, that his *prestige* might not be impaired by any abortive attempt, at such a juncture, to assert his authority, and decided to report the state of matters at once to Mr. Kearas, senior, who on this occasion had assumed the special superintendence of their agricultural studies.

Now that gentleman, during the progress made in clearing the field, had been looking on with as much pleasure and comfort as the scorching sun and heated atmosphere would allow. He had seated himself under a wide-spreading tree near the entrance to the field, his coat and hat off, and gasping for air. By his side was a stone jar, the contents of which, every now and again, he had, by way of diminishing the caloric within, been emptying into his own interior, and of course not without producing some effect, if not the one intended. On receiving the usher's report, the patriarch took a survey of the surroundings, which certainly were not at all demonstrative. Fanning himself with his broad-brimmed straw hat, borrowed from Mrs. Kearas, he exclaimed at the conclusion of the review, 'Have they gone, Mr. Grippem?'

'No, sir.'

'Then where the mischief are they?' Mr. Kearas raised his vision to the skies, as though he expected to see their attenuated forms floating around, what remained of them having possibly been resolved into thistle-down or gossamer by the excessive heat.

'Stretched under the hay-cocks and along the hedge,' responded the usher.

'Raise 'em up, Mr. Grippem,—raise 'em up! The character of the 'Cademy's at stake.'

'It is, sir.'

'Then why d'ye let it? Raise 'em up, Mr. Grip'—

'I think, sir, I'll require your assistance.'

'My assist-ance, Mr. Grippem!—wait—wait.' Thereupon Mr. Kearas turned round upon his knees and hands, with the intention of making an effort to rise, but his eye fell on the jar, and he was arrested, and turned back to his sitting position; before attaining which, however, but for the timely assistance of the usher, he would have assumed a recumbent position. Grasping

at the jar, he made a further application to its contents, watched with great interest by Mr. Grippem, who at the conclusion regarded the vessel very wistfully. A pause ensued, of sufficient length to afford time for Mr. Kearas to regain his breath and collect his ideas; and then he smacked his lips, shook his head, and returned the surplus wind, taken down by the draught, to its original source.

‘Mr.—Mr.—What-ye-call-’m, what did you say?’

‘Sir?’ said Mr. Grippem, his eyes still fixed on the jar.

‘What d’ye advise?’

This unexpected, because unusual, request for advice effectually allayed any rising emotions towards the jar; but, being unprepared with any advice, he turned round, reconnoitred the situation, looked savage, and said nothing.

‘What do you advise, Mr. Grippy?’

Mr. Grippem looked still more savage at this play upon his name, but which was unintentional on the part of the school-master.

Either irritated at Mr. Grippem’s continued silence, or, more possibly, now under the influence of the stone jar, Mr. Kearas looked at the usher, shook his head nervously, compressed his lips, and then exclaimed, ‘Mr. Gripp, you’re an ass!’

As this mode of address was equally as novel as the request for advice, the usher was completely disconcerted, and, upon recovering himself, was about to resent the impromptu imputation, when it occurred to him that Mr. Kearas was not himself, and thereupon he became more composed, and suggested that he should go and promise the boys flummery for supper if they would buckle to,—a suggestion, however, that rather increased the schoolmaster’s irritation, for he immediately replied snappishly,—

‘What would ye do that for? It’s not flummery day, and Mrs. Kearas wouldn’t stand it; and it’s wrong, sir,—wrong on principle—wrong to stuff boys at work; they work better on empty stomachs, and it’s healthier. Give ’em a bathe, Mr. Grippm! that’ll brace ’em up, an’ it won’t cost nothin’.’

‘Ah, that’s it!’ responded the usher, glad to find so ready a way out of the difficulty, and which appeared rather a wise idea from such a source, and so he intimated, wondering where he got it.

‘Why, yes, there are times when I’m oppressed by great thoughts; I’m often conglomerated myself where they come

from. What's your opinion?' said Mr. Kearas, who seemed bent on extracting something original from the usher.

'Genius, sir, genius,' said the sagacious man, pleased at an opportunity of regaining the good opinion of the schoolmaster, — 'an inspiration of genius!'

'You're right, Mr. Gruppy! That's it,—it's inspiration of gen'— Mr. Kearas was unable to finish the word, the nozzle of the jar at that moment coming in contact with his mouth, which he did not withdraw until he had imbibed a further inspiration therefrom, and of which there could now be no doubt of its being the source, for, as he replaced the jar on the ground, after vainly endeavouring to stop the mouth thereof by sticking the cork into the bow of the handle, he looked up at the usher and winked, then sawed his head up and down like a Chinese figure in a tea-shop, and winked again, whereat Mr. Grippem, moved thereto by a very unusual emotion, smiled; which smile was answered by a corresponding one from the master, and might have called up a rejoinder, terminating, as the usher had hoped, in an invitation to apply the jar to his own lips, especially as Mr. Kearas managed to make Mr. Grippem understand that he considered him a genius also, but that, either divining the usher's expectations, or at that moment instigated by an *evil* genius, the schoolmaster demanded what he was grinning at, and requested to be informed if he had taken the boys to bathe; whereupon Mr. Grippem walked off, unable, however, to resist the temptation to cast one 'longing, lingering look behind,' in doing which he saw Mr. Kearas in the act of making another essay on the same medium of brilliant ideas, but which this time was a failure, as in the effort he overbalanced himself and fell backwards, and, after a few ineffectual attempts to regain his equilibrium, quietly resigned himself to the overpowering influence of his potations, and went off into a heavy sleep.

'All hands to bathe!' shouted the usher-in-chief, which was taken up by his deputy, and in a second the field, that seemed to have been abandoned to the gnats, flies, and midges, that during the day had engaged in fruitless efforts to extract nourishment out of parchment hides, but on failure thereof had resentfully inflicted smarting, itching wounds in lieu, was alive. Shouting, running, and falling over the hay rows, the fagged, worn-out boys appeared to be animated with a fresh vigour; hedges, gate, and walls were quickly cleared, and an exciting chase for the river ensued.

The part of the river selected as the bathing-place was in every way adapted to the purpose. It was a smooth, limpid sheet of water, formed by an inlet of the land at the foot of a grassy slope, of sufficient depth to swim comfortably, and not too deep for the smaller boys to wade up to their chins upon a soft, sandy bottom. At a short distance above the falls, the murmur whereof could be heard as the water poured over into the basin, it was situated at the left extremity of the plantation.

Splash succeeded splash, as the boys, undressing as they ran, arrived at the river side, some diving, others running and ducking, all eager to enjoy the refreshing, exhilarating element, as they laved their hot, wearied bodies in its tepid waters, and giving full latitude to their wild propensity to splash, upset, and half-drown the weaker ones, who in terror fled to some more retired spot to escape their hilarious tormentors.

As soon as Messrs. Grippem and Shadd had duly inspected their charge, the former wandered by himself along the river bank, leaving Mr. Shadd to superintend the ablutions, which he did by falling asleep in a bush by the edge of the plantation; Mr. Grippem, meanwhile, as he pursued his solitary ramble, ruminating on the contents of the stone jar, for the disappointment in testing which he was revolving some measure of compensation, probably taking it out in some outstanding account with the refractory boys of that day, as soon as all should have settled into the regular order.

Floating on backs, treading water, swimming hand-over-hand, turning somersaults, and other such aquatic achievements, the boys were now at the very height of their sport, when a figure appeared on the brow of the perpendicular height on the opposite side of the river, under which was the cave alluded to in the previous chapter; but before it had attracted the attention of the bathers, it had disappeared. In less than ten minutes afterwards, pouring down the sides of the bank, came a troop of boys, shouting and hallooing most lustily.

'The Pshawbys! the Pshawbys!' resounded from the Kearas side of the river; and in a minute every boy was out of the water, making for his clothes, into which he lost no time in ensconcing himself, the more timid or excited running off with them to a safe distance before commencing his toilet. But rapidly as the boys resumed their clothing, they were not a whit too soon; already some of the Pshawbys were crossing the river a little higher up, where it was shallower, leaping from stone to stone, as they pro-

jected above the water, whilst others were essaying less fordable parts with some hesitancy. The foremost had reached nearly midway, when a general cry was raised to stop them ; and thereupon several, without waiting to put on shoes or coats, rushed down to the water's edge, and kept up a running fire of sticks, stones, and mud, to retard their progress until their fellow-scholars had time to assemble. The enemy wavered, and one or two hastily returned to the shore, speedily followed by the rest. The temporary check thus given afforded time for the whole body of the Kearas boys to dress and come up, each carrying his coat in one hand, which he adroitly used as a shield, as the pelting now became general on both sides. To prevent the crossing, which was every now and again attempted above the ford, parties were stretched on both sides along the river. During these preliminary proceedings, more than one of either school was put *hors-de-combat*. In this feature of the engagement, Aslem, who was a good shot, distinguished himself, and elicited shouts that stimulated him to greater daring. On a brief cessation of the pelting, he dashed down his coat on the gravelled shore, and, calling over to the other side, dared any one of them to 'come on !' At this challenge one of the Pshawbys was seen to run to a group a little higher up, and directly after returned with a bigger lad, whom Willie recognised as the leader of the party on the moor. Throwing off his jacket and shoes, he shook his fist, and leaped into the water, wading, or jumping, where too deep, from stone to stone. Aslem in the same manner as eagerly advanced towards him. As they approached each other they were watched with absorbing interest ; every boy hastened to the spot and cheered on his own champion. Another spring, and Aslem cleared a deep place, and gained a footing on a mound of earth within a few inches of the surface of the water, and of about three or four feet in superficies ; the next instant the other was on the same narrow foothold in the centre of the river.

'Now,' said the Pshawby, 'what did ye want with me,—a good licking? You'll get it afore I'm done with ye.'

'Who'll give it me?' said the other.

'Who?' said the Pshawby representative, eyeing him with contempt, and doubling his fists ; 'why, I will.'

'You!' exclaimed Aslem, clenching his teeth. 'Take that !' and he struck him a blow in the chest, that but for his firmly-planted feet would have sent him into the stream.

'Golly!' said the enraged lad, 'I'll pay ye for that!' and, recovering himself, dealt a blow that was dexterously parried and followed up by another from Aslem, that made the blood spurt from his antagonist's nose, but which was as savagely returned, and with equal effect. As the place was too strait to afford room for a regular spar, they mutually grasped each other, and a struggle ensued, in which each tried desperately to hurl his opponent into the water.

The contest was now one of strength, and as they were about equal in this particular, the issue would probably depend upon accident,—in one or the other, if not both, in the heat of the strife overstepping the bounds of the diminutive battle-ground. At one time the Pshawby was pressing his antagonist over the verge of the boundary, when shouts and frantic cries ascended from his side; gathering up fresh energy, the Grumbleby forced him back into an equally perilous position, when the shouts were taken up on the opposite shore, and cries resounded of 'Over with him, Aslem!—over with him!' At length they appeared inclined to pause to gain breath, but the bitterness each now felt prevented it, for, as their flashing eyes met, they threw themselves on one another with imprecations, and put forth their remaining strength for the final tussle. Clutched in each other's arms, they vainly strove to move, as though embedded in the soggy mound. The excitement on the shore was intense. Adroitly thrusting his foot between Aslem's legs, the Pshawby had nearly tripped him, but, clinging to his antagonist's waist, before he could replace his raised foot to the earth, by a rapid lunge he thrust him to the edge, and in a second over both went into the deep water, and were borne along the stream by the strong current. But they were good swimmers, and instantly struck out for the shallow water on their own sides.

The excitement was no longer endurable: wildly shouting and screaming, both parties dashed into the water, and made towards each other, and, as a consequence, some, carried off by the current, were struggling to gain a footing on the slippery stones, or to regain the shore, whilst others, advancing in their impetuosity over the least fordable parts, found themselves arrested by the depth of the river. Even the smallest boys had caught the enthusiasm, and were jumping barefooted from stone to stone. Unable to resist the contagion, Willie too started after the rest, and had reached a position in the vicinity of Frendzburgh, who, at the first sight of the issue of the two senior boys'

struggle, had by successive bounds come to the assistance of Aslem, but which was not required, as the latter had reached and climbed on to a rock lower down. Ambitious to distinguish himself before his friend, Willie, overrating his power, made a spring towards a large stone, but fell short of the mark, and was carried swiftly along towards the fall.

Hearing the splash, Trelawney turned round, and saw at a glance the boy's danger; but before he had time to stoop and endeavour to grasp him, he had floated past. Calling to Aslem to make an effort to stop him, he hurried back to the banks, and ran down to a turn in the river, but arrived a moment too late, the current having hurried the boy past. He looked towards Aslem, who was coolly watching him, without the least disposition to render any aid, especially at the bidding of one towards whom he entertained no good-will. Without waiting to upbraid him for his unfeeling conduct, Trelawney again started, this time for a spot familiar to him from having often set his night-lines there. Close by this the water narrowed, passing through some partially-concealed rocks. Two or three boys, who had become aware of the dangerous occurrence, ran panting to render what help they could. Down the steep bank, crushing through the impeding bushes, and dashing through the sedgy water, Frendzburgh climbed on to a ledge, and leaped from stone to stone. At one desperate bound he gained the covered rocks at the very instant Willie was being borne through. As the water was low, the current was running more rapidly. Stooping down, he caught at the drowning boy, and missed. Thrown forward by his impetuosity, he lost his balance, and, vainly struggling to regain the rocks, in another minute he too was swept towards the fall, whose proximity was proclaimed by the increasing swiftness of the stream and the hollow roar.

The boys who had followed looked on with mute dismay; the rumbling noise of the falls, the foam of the water as it plunged down, bearing along fragments of stone and branches of trees, the splashing sound of the mill-wheels,—all rose before them as the knell and winding-sheet of the two who had unprecedentedly gained a place in their hearts, never so keenly realized as at this moment. Shudderingly they cast their eyes over the intervening space. For some rods immediately above the falls there was a broad sheet of water, with little apparent motion except in the centre, until nearing the curling edge of the jagged rocks, when, in unison with the main body, along its

whole length it poured swiftly into the gulf below. In some portions of this sheet, large boulders, that had been gradually though imperceptibly borne onwards through the lapse of years, but hidden in the earlier part of the season, were now peeping out; there was a chance—it was the last—that they might yet be brought up by one of these. With one, however, this was impossible: the younger boy was evidently unconscious. For Frendzburgh, with his strength, agility, and known self-possession in time of need, there was a hope.

On, on they went, both borne along the same course,—Frendzburgh, with his head above water, striving to stem the current as he manfully struck out, in which, had the distance been greater, the chance was that he might have been successful. A little beyond him, and in advance of the broad sheet, was another angle, around which they must pass before being carried into it; to this the boys flew, but Willie and Frendzburgh were nowhere to be seen. Instinctively they closed their eyes to the fearful catastrophe; and at that instant a sharp plunge was heard, that drew from each boy a cry of agony, and caused him to run to ascertain if any trace of the bodies could be obtained floating beyond. They had scarcely proceeded a dozen steps, when, from the rising ground in the circuit they were obliged to make, they were arrested by the sight of a half-naked boy, buffeting the water with quick but measured strokes, and making for something, which a second glance discovered to be Frendzburgh, coming down through another of the many channels which the lowness of the water had made, and striking out with less energy, but still unconquered.

Attracted by the plunge, Trelawney looked in the direction from which the sound proceeded, and, comprehending the meaning, raised his head, and in rapid tones exclaimed, ‘Don’t mind me! don’t come here! Wilton—Wilton—save Wilton—yonder!’ lifting one hand faintly, and pointing in the direction of the floating body, after which he had undauntedly been in pursuit.

The boy addressed immediately turned, and struck out towards Willie. The distance between them and the falls was fast shortening; in a few seconds they would be within the vortex.

‘Strike out,’ cried Frendzburgh, ‘for mercy’s sake!’

A powerful stroke was the quick and only response, followed up by others equally as effective, and which brought the boy almost miraculously, at the very nick of time, to the spot where, caught

by an inshore eddy, Willie was being whirled under an overhanging bank, from the top of which a bough of a half-uprooted tree impended.

'Quick, quick!' cried Frendzburgh feebly, and half sinking from exhaustion.

Harfagr, for it was he, by a marvellous propulsion crossed the eddy in advance, and, as Willie's body was shot towards the bank, seized him by the coat flap with one hand, whilst with the other he caught at the bough. The shock occasioned by this sudden arrest of the descent of the two almost strained his shoulder from its socket; but, firmly retaining his grasp, he shouted to the boys, who had been joined by two others, and whom he had seen on the shore, to make haste. They were speedily on the lower side of the bank, and, linking their hands together, waded in the water to their armpits, when they first relieved Harfagr of his burden, and then pulled him to land.

Starting to his feet, he looked round for Trelawney. He was not there; he had failed to reach the tree, and was being drifted to the edge of the fall, still, however, striking out towards the shore. Without waiting to consider its futility, Harfagr rushed back into the river, and was swiftly borne down after Frendzburgh, who with himself, one after the other, was hurled over the falls; fortunately, however, they were so close to the shore that the force of the stream was comparatively slight, and the height of the descent not more than a few feet, and, as they went over sideways, they were not much bruised. Harfagr was the first to find his legs, at a short distance from their fall, and hastened to the assistance of Frendzburgh, who was now too exhausted to make any further effort in his own behalf; but, as the ground gradually shelved from the plantation into the river at this spot, he was not long in assisting him to the shore, on the grassy banks of which he laid himself down. Motioning to his preserver to let him alone, he went off into a faint, anxiously watched by Harfagr.

By this time the boys had come up, carrying Willie between them, whom they laid by Frendzburgh's side, and commenced chafing and rolling in the grass, in order to restore the suspended animation, being somewhat accustomed to casualties on the river, though never before of so serious a nature. Alarmed at the apparent fruitlessness of their efforts, they proposed that he should be at once carried home; but, dreading the consequences to themselves, Mape requested one of them to go for his coat,

directing him where to find it, and by the aid of the rest denuded him of his wet clothing, and after another vigorous rubbing, during which Harfagr declared he felt the blood tingling,—probably in his own hands,—he was enveloped in Mape's ample garment. The rough handling and warmth of the coat produced results, and, after some further efforts, evident signs of life were given, which encouraged the boys to renewed exertions, finally terminating in his being so far restored as to be able to be mounted on one of their backs, and there held on by two others. They then trudged towards the school by way of the fields, keeping close to avoid being seen. Despatching the remaining boy for such articles of clothing as at the commencement of the fray had been left at the river side belonging to their party, Harfagr remained by the side of Trelawney, occasionally rubbing his hands and feet, and taking advantage of the delay to wring the wet out of his own clothes, and hang them on the bushes to dry. At length, recovered sufficiently to attempt his return, though still much exhausted, Mape had the happiness of assisting his friend to the school.

After the engagement of Aslem and the Pshawby, which had terminated so abruptly, the contest had become general, and was being carried on with good spirit, some on either side having succeeded in crossing the river higher up; but on the arrival of the boy who had been despatched for the clothing belonging to Trelawney's party, he found a general rout had taken place at the seat of war.

On the other side the enemy were in full retreat up the banks, hotly pursued by the redoubtable Pshawby himself, at the head of a brigade of ushers, and other members of his staff, cheered on by the hands at the mill, who were gathered near the mill-race, greatly enjoying their precipitate flight. Nor were the Grumbletonians in any better plight. In an equally demoralized state, they were making for the covert of the plantation, rushing across the field with boots, or coats, or trousers in hand, or leaping and running under cover of walls, thus dividing the attention of Messieurs Kearas, junior, Grippem, Shadd, and other members of the household troop, including purveyors Kaily and Jurdy, and the farm-servants; the latter, however, on the first receipt of the news, which had spread to the two academies like wildfire, were hastening to the scene with the avowed intention of assisting their own side, when they were very unwillingly pressed into the service of the authorities, but whom they very feebly aided.

On arriving at the school premises, the 'all in' was proclaimed, and the list called to ascertain the missing, but which, as on all such occasions, loyal to one another, was *nil*, a much closer inspection being requisite to ascertain the presence *in propria personâ*. After a tirade of threatenings and cautions from the junior master, in the enforced absence of the senior, the proceedings wound up by the announcement that every boy was confined to bounds until further orders; whereupon Mr. Kearas, junior, attended by the usher of the black rod and his assistant, retired from the school-room, in which the boys were ordered to stay the remainder of the evening.

Scarcely had Mr. Minas Kearas proceeded a dozen steps on his return to the house, when, looking across the playground, he espied the gate entering into the 'close,' which had been partially opened, suddenly slam. Attracted by this strange proceeding on the part of the gate, he stopped, and continued his observation, but as the gate did not repeat the operation, he was about to turn to Mr. Grippem for a solution of the mystery, when that individual, without uttering a word, darted across the playground, followed by the shadow and the junior schoolmaster, and, pushing open the gate, discovered the three boys in charge of Willie, hidden with their burden behind the wall, thereby accounting for the phenomena of the gate; it appearing that just as they were about to pass through, they saw Mr. Kearas and his aids issuing from the school, and, under the delusion that their action had not been noticed, they crouched under the wall, waiting until the trio had disappeared.

'Oh! oh!' exclaimed the usher, with a sardonic expression of countenance, 'at your larks, eh, are ye? Hide and seek, is it? He! he!—I see. It's my turn to *hide* now;' and thereupon he seized Cognod, the boy who had last carried Willie, and was endeavouring to conceal him from view, and, picking up a stick that had been dropped by Trotter, commenced an illustration of his mode of playing at hiding, by bestowing some expressive blows about the back and legs of the young Grumbleby, but which, judging by his cries, were by no means appreciated, resulting in a number of attitudes that Mr. Grippem termed 'capers,' which he requested him not to 'kick up.'

During these preliminaries, Mount, who was one of the party, escaped over the wall; whilst Trotter, seeing his turn would thus be the next, suddenly concluded he would not await it, and ran off to the middle of the field to conceal himself amongst the

uncarted hay, whence, despite the expostulations, remonstrances, and threats of the three officials, he could not be persuaded to return to take a part in the new mode of playing hide-and-seek. Relieved of any further attention to his bearers, their eyes fell on Willie, seated against the wall, and, exulting in the prospect of having one more on whom to expend his surplus wrath, the irate usher seized him by the arm, and, dragging him away from his support, shook him, and was about to strike him, when Mape, who had met the boy that escaped over the wall whilst he was conducting Frendzburgh slowly home, learning the state of matters, left the latter in charge of Mount and the fourth boy, and, hastening to the scene, arrived in time to interpose his body, and receive the intended blow on his own person. As this interference caused the teacher to let go the boy, he fell to the ground with a groan. Seizing Harfagr, he was about to strike him, when he was arrested by the exclamation of the junior schoolmaster, and his attention was directed to the state of the boy Willie, whose deathly countenance and nude state—his arms having fallen out of Mape's coat—elicited the surprise and wonderment of all. Turning to Harfagr for an explanation, he informed them of such particulars as would not be to the disadvantage of the rest.

'Fell into the river!' exclaimed Mr. Minas, as soon as Harfagr had concluded his confused narration, and which exclamation was duly re-echoed by the two teachers. 'Mr. Grippem, we must make an example.'

'We must, sir,' responded that gentleman.

'We must,' faintly echoed Mr. Shadd.

'That boy must be flogged,—punished, Mr. Grippem,—as a warning to him and all the other boys not to fall into the river.'

'He must, sir,' again responded the gentleman addressed.

'He must,' echoed Mr. Shadd.

'He might have been drowned, Mr. Grippem; and what would have been the consequence to my disconsolate parents?'

'They'd have lost the remainder of the year's tuition fee,' said Mr. Grippem sympathisingly, whilst Mr. Shadd appeared stupefied at the thought, and could say nothing.

'The remainder of the year!' responded the junior master. 'Many years! It would be many years before he'd be a man.'

Mr. Grippem comprehended his mistake, but said nothing, affected too much by the contemplation of the extent of the risk that had been run; whilst in some measure to supply the

hiatus, Mr. Shadd shook his head, and said faintly, 'Perhaps never.'

As all attempts to get him to stand on his feet proved useless, it was, on consultation, deemed prudent to defer the flogging, and in the meantime, by way of present punishment, to send him to bed without his supper; and thereupon Mr. Shadd, with the assistance of Cognod, was ordered to carry him up to his room and see him in bed.

On the report reaching the ears of the establishment, it appeared to elicit one general burst of indignation, that one of their boys should presume to fall into the river, thereby incurring, not only the risk of a funeral, but, as Mr. Minas grandiloquently portrayed it to Mrs. Kearas and the domestic staff assembled in the kitchen, jeopardizing the good name of an establishment hitherto without a stain on its escutcheon. It is needless to say that these sentiments were highly commended and approved by his virtuous maternal parent, and would have been equally shared by the paternal, had he not at that moment, oblivious to all, been sound asleep in the parlour, still under the influence of the contents of the jar. Continuing his animadversions as he found himself surrounded by so appreciative an auditory, he proceeded to expatiate on the prospective loss of £20 per annum, not to reckon the additional £5 as parlour boarder,—which he understood his sagacious father meant to include in the bill, if it had to be struck out again,—with certain undefined extras, and all to be enjoyed at least for the next ten years. The peril—not to the boy, but to the establishment—had been great. It had this time been saved from the reproach and the loss; but an example must be made, or it might become contagious, and their most valuable boys take like spaniels to the water. Had it been that scapegrace Harfagr, whose quarterages had ceased during the last twelve months, and in all probability would not be resumed, it would have been quite another thing, altogether different, and one that could be tolerated.

As Mr. Kearas continued thus volubly to enlarge on the enormity of Willie's conduct, and the dangerous precedent set, which, unless summarily stamped out, threatened to interfere with the success of this hitherto very successful Academy, all seemed aghast, and shared in the sense of wrong done to the institution, from the consequences of which they had so narrowly escaped. The old maid-of-all-work, as Mrs. Kearas looked over

to her, and raised her hands and eyes in pious horror, reciprocated her actions, and, laying down the slop-pail, blew her nose with the duster, to restrain the rising tear. Tommy Kaily paused, impervious to the smell of singeing cloth occasioned by pressing his iron too long on the seam of a jacket sleeve, laid down his goose, and, resorting to a piece of folded paper in his waistcoat pocket, stuffed his nostrils with two thumb-loads of snuff before he was himself again. Jurdy stopped in the act of hammering a piece of soaked leather that he had taken out of the tub by his side, and at the conclusion of the harrowing recital threw it back again,—a rather thoughtless act on the part of the cordwainer, as it revived the painful idea of boys falling into water, and caused a sensation amongst the audience, heightened by Mrs. Kearas nervously demanding whether that was a distant splash she heard,—some dear innocent soul falling in the river,—and was only calmed down by the maid-of-all-work informing her that it was not, only one of Jurdy Sheepshanks' soles.

Whilst this scene had been enacting in the kitchen, the shadow of a boy had more than once flitted past the spacious window, and, upon ascertaining that the whole of the establishment were gathered there, and too absorbed in some topic to observe his actions, Harfagr crept close under the window until past it, and then, slipping into the open door, glided along the passage-way across the dark outer hall, and, boots in hand, ascended the stairs, and in another second was in the room in which was Willie's bed. Here he paused, and listened to ascertain if there was any person in the rooms beyond, but, finding all quiet save the heavy breathing of the boy, he approached his couch on tiptoe, and stood at the foot thereof. Presently he went round to the side towards which his head was turned, and, stooping down, looked into his face. Observing that his eyes were only partially closed, he put his hand to one of them, and as gently as so rough a lad could, raised the lid, and, peering close into his face, said softly, 'Woolton, doan't see ma, lad?'

Willie drew a long sigh, slowly opened his eyes, and then closed them again.

Harfagr waited a few minutes, but, seeing he took no further notice, spoke in a higher key; at the same time baring the clothes to his shoulders,—'Aw say, luk here, what ails tha? an't tha well?'

Willie opened his eyes again, but, without noticing him, turned on the other side.

'Wool t' nawther spaik nur luk at a feller?' continued the disappointed lad. Then, leaning over the bed to get another look, he added, 'An't tha better? Tha isn't deead?'

Roused by his persevering efforts, Willie turned round, and, gradually recognising the friendly lad, smiled faintly, which occasioned Harfagr's features to relax into a broad, pantomimic grin, and, patting the boy's shoulder, he said,—

'Tha'lt sooin be all reyt, won't ye, owd chap?'

Willie only smiled in response, and a silence ensued.

At a loss what next to say, Harfagr looked round the room until his eyes again fell on the boy's face, when a thought occurred. 'Happen tha'rt hungry?' and he dived his hands into his trousers pockets, whence he drew an assortment of marbles, cobberer nuts, a bit of rusty iron sharpened at one side for a knife, and other articles of *vertu*, but which, not being what he was in quest of, he returned to their depository, and began an examination of his other pockets, when from a similar variety of articles he extracted a small hard crust of brown bread, having a sour smell. 'Here, Woolton, ate 't, at's good. Aw've etten a bit off 't mysen, an' at's good, aw tel't ye. Aw sam'd it out o' swoil toob, an' dried 't, an' it ates good.' He smacked his lips by way of confirming his assertion, at the same time putting it to Willie's lips, but which he kept tightly shut. 'Doant t' be feared! et's noice. Luk 't ma.' He bit off a small piece, and commenced chewing at a great rate, and with signs of relish. 'Nah, tak 't;' but as Willie declined, he continued, 'Wall, aw'm feared aw've nowt moar.' Whereupon he resumed the examination of his pockets, coming upon one or two additional ones between the lining and the cloth of his waistcoat, but was interrupted in the search by the sound of a footstep on the principal stairway, and, hastily gathering up his specimens, that he had laid on the bed as he drew them forth, and which might have formed objects of envy to some collector of curiosities, he whispered in Willie's ear, 'Tha'lt be all reyt t' morn! Aw mun goa; soomboady's coomin.' He picked up his boots, and was nearly to the door when he returned, and put the crust under the pillow, whispering, 'Happen tha'll ate 't bine by;' then escaped from the room just as the approaching footstep was heard on the landing.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LIGHTS AND SHADES.

THE soft balmy breezes and fruitful showers of spring, succeeded by the more settled weather of May, and again by the warm, enervating days of midsummer, had yielded an abundant crop of herbage, and already the rye-grass, timothy, and clover had fallen with the clink of the mower's scythe, and been gathered into well-filled barns, or dotted the meadows with gable-built stacks; thus leaving the farmer a brief space to watch, with alternate emotions of hope and fear, the promise of a rich ingathering of the luxuriant cereals. The scented blossoms, too, had blown and fallen in orchard, garden, and hedge, and been replaced by an opulent fruitage, that, though only partially ripe, was weighting the trees and bushes.

Here and there the bee and the drone, with their monotonous hum, were poising over the pendent petals of the honeysuckle that festooned the verandah, until, making choice of one more inviting to their dainty taste than the rest, they dived into the narrow opening, sipped the nectarine, and, quickly reappearing with the additional freight, wheeled off, as they resumed their droning note, in quest of some equally tempting viscous depositary. The swallow and martin, sitting under the shade of the thatch or chimney, twittered a welcome to their mates returning laden with an ample catch of insects, and, whilst these transferred to the eager gaping nestlings the abundant supply, in their turn gracefully dived off in undulating rise and fall or circling rounds, until, by equal fortune favoured, they too returned and relieved their watching mates. The robin and the house-sparrow hopped amongst the flower-beds, or threaded their way through elder and currant bushes; and a blackbird, emboldened by the stillness of the place, took his station for a brief space on the plum-tree in the corner, whilst he opened his golden beak to whistle his saucy

strain in defiance of the well-fed pussy, who lay basking in the sun on the gravel walk, too indolent to be provoked into a stealthy ambushade.

On the afternoon of the day to which the above imperfect sketch applies, the glass folding-doors of a small room had been thrown wide open upon the aforesaid verandah, that extended along the front of a pleasant genteel cottage, to admit the sweet-scented air from the richly-stored flower-garden, in the very perfection of bloom. Within a few feet of the door, on the inside, a couch had been wheeled round, so as to admit of a view of the lovely and tastefully-arranged floral beds being enjoyed by a lady reclining thereon, and who, affected by the stillness and warmth of the atmosphere, had sunk into a calm slumber.

A tidy little lass of about twelve years of age, apparently a waiting-maid, was moving about the room on tiptoe, occasionally busied in arranging some flowers, which she had recently gathered in the garden, into a well-assorted nosegay, to be deposited in a green-tinted glass vase on a small round marble-topped table, interrupted at intervals by her stepping over to the couch to drive off an intrusive fly with a fan of her own construction, made of leaves and rushes; after which she would step into the verandah, look out towards the garden gate, then pick a honeysuckle, and, inhaling its fragrance, return to the nosegay and add it to the other flowers. The task completed, she went carelessly round the room, until her attention was arrested by a workbox on a side-table, the elaborate mosaic-work of which she stopped to examine, mechanically tracing its diamonds, squares, octagons, and other figures, until, as ordinarily with the young, though not exclusively with them, seeing leads to touching, and touching to something else, her curiosity additionally stimulated by restlessness at the weariness of her employment, she slightly raised the lid, and stooped down to peep thereunder, but as this only revealed some mysterious little indescribables, it of course did not allay her curiosity, but rather intensified it; so, casting a hurried glance towards the sofa, with some misgivings she gradually raised the lid a little, only a little higher, and was once more stooping down to peep, when a slight movement of the sleeper warned her that to her improper action had been added the neglect of duty, to the discomfort of her charge. Hastily letting down the cover of the box, she caught up her fan, and crept over to the couch to chase away the little winged tormentors that had taken advantage of this intermission to perform sundry rapid evolutions across the

sleeper's face, evidently making the most of their short immunity. The tickling sensation incident to such procedure had occasioned the movement that called the thoughtless girl back to her post, which, as it had also resulted in her letting down the lid of the box with a noise, caused the sleeper to wake, and, looking into the girl's blushing face as she stood over her, she asked what that noise was, but, without awaiting a reply, went on to question whether she had slept long, and if her sister had returned. To the last inquiry the girl replied in the negative.

The lady thus disturbed was Miss Herbert, who, in compliance with her medical adviser's directions, had the last few weeks, with her sister, been residing at a spacious cottage, in which they had rented private apartments, situated on the outskirts of a small village not far from the post town of Salisbury in Wiltshire. This county had, as previously advised by the surgeon, been selected as more beneficial than one of the maritime counties, its climate being milder, and the air sweeter, besides being better known to the family, it having been a place of resort, though in a different locality, where they had occasionally sojourned a few weeks for the benefit of the chalybeate springs. The sisters were by themselves, visited at times by Mrs. Herbert, whose presence was required in town to facilitate the settlement of legal and other matters in connection with her late husband's estate.

'Mary,' said Miss Herbert, as she rose from her seat and went over to the open door to inhale the balmy air, 'wheel the sofa here, close to the door, that I may look out better.'

Mary did as she was directed, and arranged the pillows behind the young lady; whereupon Miss Herbert directed her to bring the book she was reading to her before she fell asleep, remarking pleasantly that 'she was afraid she had not shown sufficient interest in the story, or she would not have fallen to sleep so readily,' though the monotonous tone in which the little lass read had no doubt conduced thereto.

Reseating herself at the other end of the sofa, the girl resumed her reading, but, as she had been interested therein herself, she had, whilst doing so previously, continued the story some pages on before she became aware that her mistress had ceased to listen, consequently Miss Herbert had to request her to return to the portion she last heard.

It was an old legend of the time of Egbert, king of the West Saxons, or that division of the Heptarchy known as the Kingdom of Wessex, founded by Cerdic and his son Kenric in the early

part of the sixth century, and originally comprising the counties of Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, and Dorsetshire, as also the Isle of Wight; but eventually, after various reverses and changes of fortune, absorbing all the other divisions, and blending the whole into one monarchy under Egbert. In the earlier years, and whilst Wessex was still a separate kingdom, Egbert, to avoid the artifices of a jealous rival, had prudently retired to the court of Charlemagne, where, serving with the victorious armies of that renowned monarch, he became polished in manners, and accomplished in the art of governing and of war. At length, strong in the affection of the people of his native land, on the death of his enemy, the reigning king, he was recalled. From his acquired talents, as well as possessing the great martial qualities of a warrior, he was more than the equal of his Saxon peers who ruled the other portions of the island; and being endowed with virtues and abilities that added a lustre to his subsequent reign, he was enabled, both by example and wise administration, to gradually subdue the rude barbarism of his own subjects, and substitute a polish and civilisation in advance of the surrounding petty states.

Engaged in warlike demonstrations against that portion of the original Britons who, gradually driven out of their possessions, had taken their last stand in Cornwall, he was suddenly recalled to oppose a descent upon his own domain by his powerful rival, the king of Mercia, who hoped by the subjection of Egbert to obtain the undisputed sway of the several sovereignties, he having already reduced the other kings of the Heptarchy to tributaries.

It was at Ellandun in Wiltshire that the two kings met, in the year 821, and a battle so fierce and so obstinately contested ensued, 'that the river was deeply stained with the blood of the slain,' and Bernulf, the Mercian king, was defeated with great slaughter. In less than a decade, his kingdom with the rest merged into one great nation, of which Egbert was the first sovereign.

The legend, founded on the above engagement, was contained in an old volume obtained from the library at Salisbury, and abounded in wild, incredible feats and incidents, amongst which were the 'Marvellous Adventures of a Wessex Knight,' who previous to the war had been betrothed to a noble Mercian damsel, but which damsel, instead of remaining at home like a sensible young lady, had imbibed an exaggerated idea of woman's rights,

and elected to follow her warlike parent to the field, he having no male heir to do so. In the guise of knight-errant she had encountered her lover, all booted and spurred, and armed *cap-a-pie*, by the side of the river, where, not having the sense to open their mouths and bid God-speed, whereby a catastrophe might have been avoided and a tale spoiled, they unwittingly engaged in mortal combat, which, after indulging in for a brief space, they concluded by each withdrawing some paces, and then, urging on their steeds at full charge, heroically deposited their spear-points in each other's bodies, through some vulnerable portions of their armour, when, throwing up their visors, the discovery was made, and they expired in each other's arms, pathetically protesting that they did not mean to do it.

The tale would not have been worth referring to but for its local interest (which had commended it to Miss Herbert), and the conversation it led to. The ancient town of Ellandun, or Ellandunum, had long changed its name to Wilton, from its being situated on the river Willey. At the conclusion of the legend, the young girl modestly inquired into such particulars as were not quite clear to her apprehension,—‘How a lady seated on a side-saddle could be mistaken for a man? and whether she wore her petticoats over or under her armour? or if she rode straddle-legs?’ and other equally pertinent questions. Having been satisfied on these points, and afforded the additional information above noted in reference to the change in name of the town, she became the subject of new and embarrassing thoughts that she endeavoured to work into shape. The cottage in which they resided, she was also informed, was in the neighbourhood of this same Wilton, and, more singular still, at least in her estimation, the river was called Willey; and so, following out the rising suggestions, she began whispering to herself, ‘Wilton—Willie—Wilton—Willie Wilton. Why, how funny!’

She repeated it two or three times, with the design of attracting Miss Herbert's attention, but in which, however, she was not successful, as that lady was just then occupied in turning over the leaves of the old volume, and reading a passage here and there. She waited a short time, but, finding her young mistress still engaged with the book, she rose, and sidling to the end of the sofa, said, ‘Miss Herbert, I know Willie Wilton!’

Miss Herbert started. It might be the rebound of her thoughts from the romance to the strangeness of the girl's assertion of her acquaintance with the names mentioned, seeming to imply that

the highly-wrought tale had occasioned some strange hallucination in her mind ; but whatever it was, she was evidently disturbed by the girl's remark, and replied with earnestness,—

‘ Know what, child ? Why, were you ever here before ? ’

‘ O no ! but I know Willie Wilton. ’

‘ What Willie Wilton ? Wilton is not a person's name, it's the name of a town—of the town over there, ’ pointing in the direction ; ‘ and the river is called Willey. ’

‘ O yes, I know that, Miss ; but then I know a dear little fellow called Willie Wilton, and that makes me think of him,—dear, dear Willie ! ’ said she, the tears starting to her eyes, and no wonder, for, as the reader has already surmised, it was Mary Jones herself. But how came Mary Jones in Wiltshire ? In this very simple way : it being requisite that some person should be obtained to assist Hetty in her attention to her sister, Mrs. Herbert, not being able to spare one of the domestics for that purpose, the surgeon had undertaken to see to this, and had accordingly referred it to Mr. Grumphy, who, in rotation, had requested Miss Austen to take it in hand, when, understanding that a young active girl would better suit than an elder, she had strongly recommended Mary for the situation, especially as Mr. Grumphy had represented the lady as so desirable a mistress. Delighted at an opportunity of visiting the country for the first time in her life, the girl readily consented, and entered into her novitiate of servitude with much spirit. Thus it was that Mary Jones reappears.

As Miss Herbert gazed into Mary's face, and observed her filled eyes, she became sensibly affected ; with an effort to overcome the rising emotion, she asked, ‘ Who was Willie Wilton ? ’

‘ Oh, such a dear little fellow ! ’ exclaimed Mary, looking through her tears into her young mistress's face, a smile beaming on her countenance.

‘ And you were fond of him ? ’

‘ I loved him ; and we used to play together. ’

‘ And go out together ? ’

‘ Yes, into the parks ; and he was so pretty, ladies would stop and kiss him. ’ Miss Herbert was moved by the girl's ardour. ‘ And he gave me this, ’ tugging at a piece of narrow faded ribbon round her neck, but hidden by the band of her dress, at the end of which was a little coin ; ‘ it's a silver sixpence. I'll always keep it, and never spend it, if I'm ever so badly off. ’ Miss Herbert took the little memento in her hand, looked sorrowfully at it,

and sighed, her womanly, sensitive nature touched by the warmth of her little maid's expressions. Returning it to the girl, she said,—

'Poor Willie! you seem indeed to have been fond of him; and what became of him?' Observing the tears starting afresh to her eyes, she continued, 'Is he dead?'

'O no, I hope not! But I don't know;'—she hesitated, then resuming, said, as she wiped her eyes, 'Sometimes I think he must be, else he wouldn't have forgot us so soon, I'm sure.'

'But you have not told me what became of him.'

'Oh, why, that nasty doctor man took and sent him away miles and miles off to school. But I'm sure he needn't have done that,—there's schools a plenty near us. He seems to be fond of sending people away,—he sent you here. Well, I ain't sorry for that, cos I wouldn't have been with you and Miss Harriet in this beautiful place if he hadn't.'

'Then he is not quite so bad. You see he wants to do me good.'

'Ah, but it didn't do him good, I'm sure, to take him away from Aunt, who loved him so,—to send him goodness knows where, and us never to hear about him no more, nor Mr. Grumphy neither, who's never been the same as he was since.'

'And you don't know where he went?'

'No; but I know it's some far away—far away—*island*, I think, because I heard Mr. Grumphy tell Miss Austen that they took him away in a—in a—*what-ye-call-'em* kind of a boat,—a—a *spank*. No, no,' said Mary, quickly correcting herself, and laughing at the funny word she had used, 'that ain't it, but it was like it.'

'And that's the last you heard of him?' responded Miss Herbert, smiling at the girl's designation of the conveyance, the nearest approach she could make to the correct term '*smack*,' and suggested by its ordinary application to the same action sometimes threatened by her mother.

'I think he must be drowned,—don't you?' said Mary, looking anxiously into her mistress's face, fearing she might coincide in the suggestion.

'O no! Depend upon it he's quite safe,' replied Miss Herbert, assuming a cheerful air.

'Well, it's very strange if he is, that Mr. Grumphy, who knew all about the boat, never heard anything more from the waterman that rowed it; p'r'aps *he* was drowned!'

'Not at all; sailors don't attend to such things. But who's Mr. Grumphy?'

'Mr. Grumphy! don't you know Mr. Grumphy? Oh, he's a queer kind of a man. He's always mumble-mumbling, and looking so.' As she said this, she pulled a long face, and, closing her eyes, grunted, 'I—don—no,' and then, flapping her breast, concluded with a hearty laugh, in which Miss Herbert could not refrain from feebly joining, moved by the drollery of the girl's action.

At that moment the garden gate was opened, and swung to with a noise that attracted their attention. Stepping on to the verandah, Mary exclaimed, 'Oh, here comes Miss Harriet!' As the young lady had to pass through the serpentine paths between the flower-beds, she stopped at the centre oval to smell the thorny moss-rose, whose prickly stem resisted her efforts to gather it; then tripped along as light and merry as a fay, stopping again to listen to the robin's song, and anon made her appearance at the open door. Her complexion was tinged by the sun to a light olive, notwithstanding the shade of a broad-brimmed Leghorn hat, trimmed with light blue ribbons, and now garlanded with woodbine and wild flowers, that jauntily rested upon her silken tresses, which hung in profusion over her shoulders. She was habited in a loose-fitting, drab-coloured spencer, that descended over a white, dainty petticoat, with pointed lace-work around the bottom, the latter garment permitting the display of two tiny feet, that

'Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they feared the light,'

and were cased in sandalled shoes, tied above a pair of faultless ankles.

'O dear!' said the tired girl, as she threw herself languidly on the sofa by the side of her sister, at the same time swinging her hat by one of the strings on to the table behind, and throwing open her spencer, 'isn't it frightfully warm? And how do you feel, Bertie,—better? That's right! We'll soon have you a well body, as Mary says, and then for the rambles!—eh, Mary?' Mary smiled. 'See,' she continued, holding towards her sister a large bunch of wild flowers and grasses that she had gathered during her morning's stroll. 'Now, are they not pretty?—quite a study for good old John Hay. I must consult his work, for some of these are strange to me, and I prefer his classification ;

it's much more natural, and easily understood. Look at that strange-looking little gem,—and that; really, I don't know whether mine is not superior to Mary's bouquet yonder. Let's compare, Mary.' Mary brought her vase of garden flowers with a look of triumph, and a shake of the head, which Miss Harriet noticing, exclaimed with a smile, 'Nonsense, child! look at that old crimped geranium, it hasn't a sniff in it; but smell that,' putting a white clover to her nose.

'O yes, Miss, but it ain't near as pretty. Do you smell that rose.'

'Pooh, that rose! look at mine;' intending to exhibit a wild one in full bloom, but which, pulled from the bunch too forcibly, was immediately denuded of its corolla, leaving nothing but the little capillaments, that, tremulously shaking their heads, seemed to join Mary in the hearty laugh at her young mistress's affected look of dismay.

'Now, which is best?' exclaimed the little maid, whilst Miss Hetty, retaining her dismal air, apostrophized the stem,—

'This beautiful rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloomed with its owner awhile;'

then, thrusting the bunch into Mary's hand, she exclaimed, 'Here, take them away before they all go, and put them in water.'

'Did you meet any one in your travels?' said her sister.

'Not a soul! Is it not a stupid place? Nothing but a country bumpkin, who stared at me as though I had dropped from the clouds. By the by, has the post come in yet?'

Just as she uttered this, Mary, who was going out to the pond for some water for the wild flowers, called out, 'Here it's coming now, Miss; the man's at the gate.'

Hetty bounded up and hastened to meet him, and returned with a paper and a couple of letters, the one addressed to her sister, the other to herself. After satisfying herself that the handwriting on her sister's was Mrs. Herbert's, she handed it to her, and re-seated herself to peruse her own, exclaiming in an affected manner, 'Pon ma word! oi deklaar!—I do believe it's from the da-ar fellow himself!' Then, as she broke the seal and opened the epistle, continued, 'Well, now, I'm as good as a witch; it *is* from my beloved Zany—dear, dear Zany!' and, kissing the letter with simulated fervour, she clasped it to her bosom, thereby attracting her sister's attention, who, less expeditious in getting at the contents of her missive, looked up, and in a plea-

sant tone asked 'how the *dear* boy commenced?'—a remark that drew a merry response from Harriet, more to encourage the unusual attempt at playfulness on the part of her sister, than from any pleasure at this reference to the young lawyer; for, thoughtless and careless as she appeared, and was in reference to herself, she was painfully observant of every phase of Bertha's health and spirits, the latter of which, she was convinced, was being affected by something more than sickness of body, which indeed was itself a result of the same baleful influence. Always more sedate than herself, still formerly there was a quiet playfulness and pleasantry of manner, that, when permitted to display itself on such occasion as the present, would have rendered her quizzing very telling, but of late this had rarely been yielded to, and she had resolved into a pensive, abstracted manner, that indicated but little relish for such indulgence.

'Well, let's see! The dear boy commences thus,'—Miss Harriet took up the letter and read,—“My ever dear but cruel Dulcinea;”—that's a nice way to begin, is it not?' and she assumed an offended air, that caused Mary to go over to the flowers and laugh. 'Dear and cruel!—umph, what a monster! Let's try again;' she read the words over once more. 'Well, that's pretty, truly! very expressive,—begins by calling me names.'

Bertha laughed, and reminded her that by those expressions the captivated youth was endeavouring to convey to her a sense of the depth and sweetness of the wound she had inflicted.

'Oh, that's it! poor Quixote! Well, what next? “Enamoured of your charms,”—of course, there's no occasion to tell me that, of course you are!—“I once more stoop”—Stoop, forsooth! calls it stooping, to address his Dulcinea! I'll not submit,—*stoopid* Mr. Sancho! Here, Bertie, I'll hand him over to you, only deal tenderly with the—*the zany*.' She tossed the letter into her sister's lap. 'He's such a merry-andrew he'll help to cheer my solemn sister. I'm far enough gone already without acquiring assistance from such a *maitre-de-singe*.'

'But, my dear sister, you make no allowance for the disturbing effects of a passion so violent as Mr. Hawkes'.'

'He's a downright'—she was about to use another word, but said—'what his name imports—a *zany*.'

'You are too severe, Harriet, and too hasty in your conclusions; at least reserve your verdict for a better acquaintance.'

'A better acquaintance! it will be my fault if that occurs. Bertie, I am surprised at you!—both yourself and mamma seem

under the impression that anybody's good enough for me, whilst for Miss Herbert ! nothing but a—' She hesitated ; the acrimony with which this was uttered had touched the sensitive heart of Bertha, and as Harriet's pouting face was raised towards her, her pleading look disarmed the impulsive girl.

' You know better than to mean what your words, so hastily uttered, would imply. You know that I would deem no one too good for my kind, ministering sister.'

Though this was uttered with more positiveness than usual in her mode of speech, it was void of acerbity. The reproof was scarcely needed, for already Harriet's arm was around her sister's waist, and, resuming her old tone, she said,—

' I'll tell you what, Bertie, as you admire him so, we'll make an exchange,—I will resign Mr. Zenas to you, and you'll hand over Aubrey. Won't that be nice? I warrant your grave, solemn deportment will soon reduce my knight-errant to his senses, quicker than all the foolish Dulcineas in the world, and windmills into the bargain ; and if I don't turn that Don Quixote of yours into a Sancho Panza, then it's no bargain ;—there now !' But as this little pleasantry only elicited a faint response from the sister, the subject was not pursued, and they were soon engaged in a more serious conversation, arising out of the contents of Mrs. Herbert's letter, the most important portion of which was contained in two pages of invective and indignant protest against the conduct of a party alluded to in a paragraph of the newspaper, imprudently forwarded for Miss Herbert's perusal, especially as it could not but operate adversely in its effect on her mind, and thus render nugatory the design, in retiring to the country, to place her beyond any exciting topics.

As Hetty unfolded the paper, her eyes ran down its columns until they fell upon the obnoxious paragraph, and which, at the request of her sister, she read aloud ; it ran thus :—

' Amongst the *on dits*, it is whispered that an honourable personage, a prominent member of the Austrian embassy, will return to England to lead to the hymeneal altar the youngest daughter of a noble house, the alliance having been for some time projected.'

Hetty read it over again, and then, at the request of Bertha, handed the paper to her. After perusing the enigmatical paragraph herself, she remarked, with an evident effort at composure, ' After all, it's very indefinite ; don't you think so, Hetty ?'

' Certainly ! there are many honourable personages, and, I dare say, more than one connected with the Austrian embassy. If we

had only a Court Calendar here,' said Hetty, looking around as though expecting to find one in so improbable a place, 'we could ascertain. But it's not worth while bothering about,—mamma is so hasty in drawing conclusions; besides, such rumour may apply to some other diplomatic *corps*, if even there should be any foundation for it at all.'

'I thought to find it actually stated that such *was* the case, from mamma's letter; did not you?' said Bertha, more disturbed than she wished to appear, and hoping for some further reassuring opinion from her sister, whose quick intuitions, supplying the place of calmer and more deliberate reason, were often in advance thereof. As Harriet did not respond immediately to her inquiry, but appeared to be revolving it in her mind, she repeated the question, asking her, with great earnestness, to tell her what were her ideas of the matter.

Thus appealed to, she took up the paper, and re-read the announcement; then took up her mamma's letter, and read over the portion referring thereto, at the conclusion assuming an unusually thoughtful mood.

Impressed by her sister's manner, with a nervousness that she tried ineffectually to conceal, she said, with the fond hope that Hetty would adopt the suggestion, 'Don't you think it unwise of mamma to worry herself about so foolish and equivocal a newspaper report, even though supplemented by such vague insinuations as those mentioned in her letter as being made by the Howards?'

Harriet, whose whole deportment had changed during this conversation, and who, though she exhibited much hesitancy at first in expressing herself otherwise than by innuendoes, thus appealed to, felt it would be cruel to disguise her own sentiments in relation to the matter, replied, 'Whilst it is very vague, and may possibly have reference to some person in whom we are in no wise interested, or even one embassy confused with another, or, in fact, a report set going without a shadow of foundation, still such things are possible.'

'Possible, Hetty!' said Bertha, with evident disappointment at her sister's reply. 'Do you for one moment permit such a thought to enter your mind?'

'Ah! depend on it, sister mine,' said Hetty, with a jocoseness of manner she did not feel, 'there's no trusting these ardent swains beyond their tether. True, I have not had much experience, but I would not trust one of them out of sight. Though, on second

thoughts, I think I might trust *one*.' Miss Herbert's countenance brightened. 'Don't you think I might confide in Zenas?'

Bertha concealed her disappointment by appearing to enter into her sister's humour. 'So the heart's there, is it, after all, notwithstanding your effort to conceal it under the guise of indifference? Coquetting so early! Well, I am not surprised, though it is deeper than I had suspected.'

Hetty was a little disconcerted at this mode of taking her up, and replied with some sharpness, 'Bertha, I am surprised; for even if you mean nothing, it is treating a ridiculous subject in too serious a light. What I was about to say was, that the *person* alluded to might probably be trusted,—in the first place, because his overtures have *not* met with encouragement; and, in the next place, because, if they had, he's too arrant a zany to know how to recede.'

'Perhaps! though you may be mistaken in your estimate of Mr. Hawkes, formed rather hastily. However, you would not judge of all by an exception; for instance, of—Aubrey?' This last sentence was uttered in a deprecatory tone.

'There's much of a muchness in them all; they are a kind of palindrome,—the same read them which way you will. But, Bertie,'—drawing close to her sister, she lowered her voice, it might be to soften what she was about saying, for Mary had left the room,—'tell me, after all, is Aubrey or any man worthy of such devotion as yours?—the sacrifice of your best, and what should be your brightest, days for the sake of one over whom some mystery hangs, potent enough to cloud your life, causing you to retire from the world until you have almost become a recluse, and even, as I cannot but think, to the injury of your health,—for one from companionship with whom you are severed, and from whom of late, in my opinion, you have ceased to receive that attention such constancy demands?'

'Nay,' interposed Bertha remonstratingly, 'you make no allowance for the overwhelming importance of duties, by his undivided attention whereto he is gradually rising to that distinction to which he aspires, and which, attained, will render our separation no longer needful; fondly ambitious to elevate his wife to a position at once independent and'—

'Elevate *you*? My dear Bertha, you would adorn any position without such aid!' This was uttered with some warmth, if not resentment, at what seemed to her an implied inferiority, affecting herself as well as her sister. 'However, I think I understand it,

though not as you do, and although I am a very silly goose. Do you imagine there is no other, no covert motive? Would your union have prevented his success? If so, you were unworthy of him; if otherwise,—and there was a time when, I think, my gifted sister'—she looked in her face as she spoke, with a guilelessness that told of her sincerity and the reality of her belief in her utterances—'would have graced any courtly circle,—your talents would have rather aided than retarded any man's advance.'

The faint smile on her sister's face, accompanied by the pressure of her thin cold hand, testified to her recognition of the compliment; and, as the other paused, she responded in gentle tone, 'Thank you, dear; but perhaps, had you known all the difficulties which had to be encountered and mastered, you would be less severe.'

'And during which, instead of being a helpmeet, and aiding to bear up against, and thus identified with the struggle, enjoying with greater zest the victory, you would have been a drag, a hindrance, and so must owe the elevation of your ignoble self alone to'— She paused, the twitching of the hand she held recalled her from her taunting language, and, as she observed the increasing pallor of those pale features, her heart smote her.

Her lips trembling with emotion, Bertha exclaimed, 'Hetty, spare me!' There was that in the tone that might have construed the words into 'Pity me.'

With a slight quiver, Hetty pressed her lips against the marble forehead of her sister, and for a time both were too full to speak.

'Bertha,' said the younger, assuming her usual tone and manner, 'does Aubrey hold out any early prospect of acknowledging you as his wife?'

'Acknowledging me as his wife!' exclaimed Bertha, a tinge of colour overspreading her face.

'Well, of making you such. However, that could not be very lately, as it is now some time since you heard from him, though you have written with the same regularity as heretofore.'

'But you forget, again, that we read the other day that important despatches were passing between the two courts.'

'In other days there were moments stolen from such pressing employ, and the despatch of a messenger was a golden opportunity never lost.'

'In other days he filled a less important station.'

'And in these days,' she was about to add, 'you do,' but

adroitly said instead, 'you are less exacting. Ha! ha! Bertha! I see, after all, my goddess is but a woman, whose eyes, like others, can be blinded by love.'

'Nay, 'tis only when woman loves—as you will one day, if not already, discover—that the scales do fall off; only then that her eyes become the intelligent translators to her soul of the true in the object of her devotion, whose heart they penetrate and read without a guise, whilst through them she herself speaks, moves, and controls.'

'Without attempting to controvert one so much more capable of reasoning on such a topic, I would merely ask, for information, may not love ever be deceived,—dazed or dazzled by gazing too intently on its sun?'

'Never when guided by the true instincts of its nature.'

'But does it invariably submit to such guidance?'

'Love,' said the ardent, impassioned Bertha, 'pure, and in its initiative, bestowed on a worthy object, will leaven that object to its own nature, and then rise with it. Set on an unworthy one, of whom the estimate in its crude state exceeded its intrinsic worth, it may run riot, but that will scarcely affect the ardour of the passion, which, in its intensity, provided it find even but slight basis to work on, will still elevate the object, at least to its own ideal; to do otherwise, it would cease to be love. It does not even subordinate.'

'No; on the contrary,' interposed Harriet, 'it is itself subordinated, for according to your theorism, assimilating itself to its idol, whom it first endows with unreal and even theocratic attributes, it so thoroughly inheres therein that it loses its own identity. But to my less philosophical mind, it would seem that, having constructed such an idol, thenceforth the enslaved heart bows down and worships the semi-deity, the more captivating because concreted from its own diseased imaginings, in either case, however, placing the creature in the temple and on the throne reserved for the Creator alone.' This unexpected allusion to the Most High caused a cessation of the conversation, until, dissatisfied at the result for which she had carried it on, Hetty exclaimed abruptly, 'Then, Bertha, you retain your regard to Aubrey Grey as ever, even should there be any foundation for the report, though as to that, I agree that no stress should be laid thereon.'

'Retain my regard for Aubrey Grey! You surprise me by such a question! Most decidedly. I have made too many

sacrifices to do otherwise. Hetty, I may avow thus much to you, though it can scarcely be necessary,—I have loved Aubrey, I do love him, and will, to the close of life, be the issue as it may. With him would go all that would make life endurable. Call it folly, or madness, if you will; 'tis a woman's devotion, originating with her early love, towards the only being to whom she entrusted her heart;—but may we not sometimes forget to call things by their right name, if, in doing so, we help the illusion that makes life the sweeter?'

The impassioned manner in which this was uttered, accompanied by the flashing of the eye and the glow of the cheek, and the whole expression of feature and form, recalled to Harriet days of yore, and she could but sigh for their return. Convinced that further expostulation was fruitless, and the conversation having proceeded to a greater length than she had anticipated, attended by a seriousness unusual in their intercourse, she pursued it no further; satisfied, however, that she had had an opportunity of expressing herself as she had done.

Whether the divergence in their views arose from the difference between an affianced heart and one as yet too untrammelled to understand the omnipotency of the passion discoursed on, or some equally cogent reason, it was certain they saw through a different medium. Which was nearest the reality, if either, time will show.

As the evening closed in, they donned their hats and light shawls, and strolled round the garden to enjoy the fragrant air and observe the crimson sky; whence, as the sun sunk below the horizon, they returned to the cottage, and Bertha sat down to reply to her mamma's letter, whilst Harriet, after reading a few items of news in the papers, retired to the portion of the house occupied by the owners of the premises, and was soon engaged in a noisy romp with the children, Mary, too, being invited to join, and for a time all sorrow was forgotten.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN EJECTMENT.

‘PAPERS all ready, Mr. Skeggs?’ said the attorney, as he thrust his head out of the door between his own room and his clerk’s office.

‘All ready,’ responded the clerk; the voice indicating the direction of the speaker, rather than his being revealed by the small quantity of light finding its way into the dingy room through the dirt-begrimed windows, owing to the low state of the atmosphere without, and the heavy clouds sweeping over the city.

‘Where are you?’ said Mr. Hawkes, taking a survey of the room.

‘Here,’ replied Mr. Skeggs, rising up from one of the boxes in a corner of the room, in which he had been searching for papers.

‘Well, have you got the papers?’

‘Here they are, sir,—he held up the documents to view.

‘The *cognovit* and the writ?’

‘Yes, sir, all ready,’ and stepping behind his desk, he raised the lid, and took out a piece of coarse paper that bore greasy signs of having served the purpose of a lunch-cloth, and commenced wrapping the papers therein.

‘What’s that you’re doing?’

‘Tying them up to carry in my pocket.’

‘You are not going to put them in your pocket, surely. Are we going to do something we are ashamed of?’

Mr. Skeggs turned the parcel over in his hands, and looked at it, and then at Mr. Hawkes, without replying, but not without a thought passing rapidly through his mind that, if they were, it would not be the first time.

‘I say, are we going to sneak out of the office as though we were culprits? How often am I to impress upon you to do every-

thing above-board, and not to creep in and out the yard like a cat watching to pounce on—on—the canary opposite?’

Mr. Skeggs thought a hawk might be substituted for the cat with more propriety, but replied, under the conviction that he apprehended the lawyer’s meaning, ‘O yes, I forgot. I’ll carry it in my hand, so.’ Mr. Skeggs raised the package in front of his breast.

‘Ah, I see it will take a long time to teach you anything, as Mr. Zenas often assures me.’ Here he turned round, and bestowed a look of approval on his son, who had risen from his seat at his father’s table, and was standing behind him to see him put ‘Nosey’ through, as he sometimes termed Mr. Skeggs, in allusion to the prominence of that feature of his face. Mr. Zenas signified his unqualified assent to his father’s endorsation of his own penetration, and repeated the words, ‘a long time.’ ‘Mr. Skeggs,’ continued the elder, stimulated by his son’s interest in the proceeding, ‘doesn’t it occur to you what would be the correct thing?’

Mr. Skeggs looked at the parcel, and then at his desk, and then back to the parcel, but nothing occurred to him.

‘Mr. Skeggs, I ask you, how can the people in this yard, or in the Bury, or anywhere else, possibly be aware of the amount of business transacted by our firm, if they are not made aware of it? Imagine a lawyer of my standing proceeding on important business, accompanied by his clerk, carrying important documents, folded up in a piece of dirty paper, in his fists.’

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ exclaimed Mr. Zenas, ‘pon honour, that’s bright!—dirty paper! He! he! he! well, if ever!’ Mr. Hawkes was moved at this appreciation of his mode of representing his clerk’s conduct, whilst the clerk himself began to realise something of the ridiculous as he stood there, the butt of the two worthies; and therefore he tore off the obnoxious paper, and then looked sheepishly into the attorney’s face, as much as to say, ‘Will that do?’

‘Have we such a thing as a green bag?’ said the lawyer, in a mock tone of inquiry, at the same time fixing his eyes on that article as it hung behind Mr. Skeggs’ desk.

‘O yes, bother it!’ said Octavius, suddenly enlightened, ‘I quite forgot;’ and, taking down that professional badge, he deposited the two small legal papers at the bottom thereof, but without affecting its appearance, as it still bore the semblance of being empty.

‘Now then, reach me those papers on the shelf.’

‘Those, sir? they don’t belong to this case, sir.’

‘Don’t I know that?’ Thereupon Mr. Skeggs handed down a bundle of papers that had originally borne an endorsement, and been tied together with red tape, but that in the former case had become obliterated, and in the latter had lost its colour. Mr. Hawkes threw them on the floor, and woke up a cloud of dust that compelled a temporary retreat. These, as directed, were put into the bag, but which, nevertheless, did not add sufficiently to its bulk. Thereupon Mr. Hawkes requested Mr. Zenas to bring him the old directory off his desk, which, with an obsolete volume of Watkins on Descents, and two or three other packages of ancient date, caused their depository to assume a more bulky appearance, and promised to prove Mr. Skeggs’ muscle. After adding the leaden weight and pounce-box, and one or two super-numerary books lying on the clerk’s desk, he demanded, as he held them up with both hands, ‘if he did not think that looked more like business?’ which, of course, elicited Mr. Skeggs’ assent, and an appreciation of his employer’s ingenuity and contrivance, and of his admirable method of doing everything above-board. As this was only a very trivial illustration of Mr. Hawkes’ ingenuity in all cases, whether of difficulty or otherwise, the fact of Mr. Skeggs not having profited thereby must be attributed to the length of time it took him to learn anything out of line or tortuous. However, although Mr. Hawkes would have disclaimed any merit in the present case, and treated it as though there were nothing in it, there was something in the bag, and heavy, too, and so Mr. Skeggs found out before he was done with it.

All being thus in readiness, Mr. Hawkes gave sundry instructions to Mr. Zenas relative to his conduct to certain parties, should they call on business during his absence, and which the *promising* youth promised to attend to, should they call; but which he must have considered improbable, for, finding the coast all clear, within five minutes of the senior’s departure that young gentleman attached a well-used card to the outside door, notifying that some one would return in ten minutes, and then betook himself to a part of the town at which he was much more certain to fall in with some one, with the intention, however, of returning in time to forestall his confiding parent.

On reaching the foot of the stairs, Mr. Hawkes and his clerk were joined by a strong, stout, short man, who acted as porter,

runner, or anything else to the inhabitants of the yard ; his services, on the present occasion, being required for purposes in which, though previously explained, the attorney once more instructed him ; this time, however, more for the edification of such of the occupants of the adjoining apartments and offices as might be within hearing of his voice, raised to a high pitch. For the performance of the required duty he was to receive one shilling, but which the attorney, in an aside, directed his clerk to charge against the estate as five shillings.

This time an idea did occur to Mr. Skeggs, probably from its being a very natural one : that, as the party was a porter, it would only be in his line of duty to do porter's work, and thereupon he was about to give him the bag to carry, but the intention was cut short by Mr. Hawkes requesting him to keep close to him with the article in question, as the most probable way of his being recognised as a legal man engaged on all-important business, the porter being likewise ordered to keep close in the wake of the clerk, in which form of procession they hurried on, quite successful in the object sought. It was not long before Octavius was perspiring under the weight of his load, and changing hands very frequently, and stopping to wipe his forehead. After making the circuit of the Exchange, then round the Bank, by Bartholomew Lane into Lothbury, threading their way in the prescribed order through those crowded thoroughfares, they emerged on the road towards Finsbury Square, when Mr. Hawkes appeared to be less anxious for their continued proximity ; thereupon, gradually dropping behind, Mr. Skeggs took his station abreast of the porter, and addressing him in a familiar tone, said,

'How's your family, Winkles? getting along well?'

'On'y middlin'; we've another chick, which ain't advisable.'

'Another? you don't mean to say you've another child, Winkles, and you seven already! What makes you have so many? I say, can't ye give us a hand with this sack, Winkles?'

'Sartainly! give us a hold.' The porter took it off the pavement, where Skeggs had set it down, and carried it as easily as though it was empty.

'And how's your wife doing?' said Skeggs, rubbing the muscle of his arm, as they resumed their journey.

'Not very spry; 'deed she's pretty bad.'

'Sorry! Ill long?'

'Ever since she 'ad the young un.'

'Ah! just so, that's it, as though you hadn't enough without it; a man like you, in your circumstances, Winkles, shouldn't be ambitious. Is she very ill? doctor attending her? that's expensive.'

'Yes; but I goes to the Infirmary for the physic, so it doesn't cost so much; I'm more bothered about looking after the childer whilst she's down.'

'I daresay! Couldn't you get rid of some of them?'

'Get rid of 'em!' said the man, staring into Skeggs' face; 'sell 'em to a chimbley sweep, I s'pose? Not if I knows it! Bless the Lord! it pleased Him to give 'em, and now we 'ave 'em we wouldn't part wi' one for no money, and one more don't make much odds, I count.'

'No, no; I don't mean that. Ain't they old enough to go out to work?'

'Well, the oldest gal does chores, an' Jack's out to a place, a-doing of errands; that's all as can do anything yet.'

'Is Jack smart, and gets good wages?'

'Well, he's off at six, and comes home at nine, cleans knives and boots, waits on the ladies, carries up the coal, minds the dog, takes the boy to school, gives a turn in the shop, carries home the 'taters and other green-groceries, and does other things as is suitable, and gets two shillings a week; and when he's big, he says—poor Jack, which is a good boy—he's going to take my place, an' keep me an' his mother.'

'Now, did he say that?' said Skeggs, quite interested in this account of Jack. 'But your wife's sick,'—still inclining to the gloomy side. 'Does she suffer much?'

'She do, an' that's all 'ats grieving me; she's been a good 'ooman to me an' the childer; an' though I says it, there aint her match, an' I don't see how we'll get on without her;' and he hung down his head and sighed.

'Will she die?' said Skeggs compassionately.

'Well, I don't want her to, but which, if she's a-going to, I'd preference her doing it at once, and not hang on. I couldn't a-bear to see her a-sufferin'.'

Mr. Skeggs felt sorry as he noticed the man's downcast look, and began to revolve in his mind how he could help him, but was unable to devise any way, except by denying himself; but as his own very straitened means had already necessitated this to the closest shave, he was about giving the thought up, when it occurred to him he might do without sugar or milk in his tea, or

both, and then it was suggested that he give up the whole ; he resolved to take it into consideration, it being too serious a matter to decide on rashly. Just then the train of thought was interrupted by his becoming aware that Mr. Hawkes was not in sight. He stopped the porter, and looked about. 'If that isn't provoking ! Which way did he go ?'

The porter had been too much engrossed in the narration that so nearly concerned himself, to take notice of Mr. Hawkes' movements ; and thereupon he looked up the street, and down the street, and then across the street, and then at Mr. Skeggs, who had been similarly occupied, and who ended his reconnaissance by asking the porter, 'If that wasn't a go ?' Mr. Skeggs was about to resume the survey, when, having learned that he knew to where they were going, the porter suggested they should take different roads, and meet at the junction of Chiswell and Whitecross Streets, whereby they might intercept the attorney on the road. In accordance with this arrangement, Octavius started double-quick, but had not got far when the loud calls of Winkles arrested him, and Mr. Hawkes was seen coming towards them, evidently in search of his lagging escort.

After delivering himself of a salutary admonition and caution as to their future prospects, should they continue to dawdle along life's roadway at the same pace, they were directed to go on and await his coming, whilst he called, on the road, on the intended purchaser of the property to which their business led them. As they wended their way, Mr. Skeggs did not omit to offer to relieve Mr. Winkles of his load, but which was declined, the latter assuring him that he preferred having something to carry, as it bore the appearance of business, and maintained his standing with other porters.

The place at which they finally halted was in the neighbourhood of Golden Lane and Goswell Street, the premises being approached by a narrow alley or lane, the entrance whereto was under an arch, or rather built over by a tenement ; passing under which, the alley was bounded its whole length by a broken-down wall on either side, and appeared to be the receptacle of the filth of the houses in the vicinity. At the end of the lane, which terminated on a small plot of ground, was a large, tenantless brick building ; the foundations and other portions were falling down, from ill-usage and neglect as well as age ; the windows had been boarded up, but, save here and there the splintered remnant of one that had broken short, or such as were

too high to be reached, the boards had all disappeared on the first and ground floors, probably long since employed to aid the culinary requirements of the squalid tenements in the surrounding lanes and courts. The building had been a brewery, and, like other such deserted places, had its own ghost-story, thereby causing it to be avoided after dark. The odour arising from the putrid refuse that had accumulated around it operated as a like preventive of its being visited by daylight, unless by beings who might not be accredited with noses, at least, capable of being affected by such deposits.

As Mr. Skeggs and the porter entered upon this part of the demesne, they were quickly brought to a stand. If they went on, according to experience thus far, sinking deeper at every step, they would soon be up to their knees; so they mutually agreed that they would not go on, but await the arrival of the chief before proceeding any farther. But this conclusion was no sooner arrived at than interfered with. The porter was about seating himself on a large stone that had rolled off the enclosure wall, when their attention was attracted to the building by sounds issuing therefrom. After listening a minute or two, they determined to make a further effort to reach the place, and satisfy their curiosity by ascertaining the origin of the sounds. To this end a more careful exploration of the ground was made, whereby some more reliable way of reaching the premises might be found. After several essays to cross a green, stagnant pool, in which they narrowly escaped defiling themselves, they succeeded, by sinking a stone here and there, in leaping across on to firmer soil close to the building. As there was no lower window at this gable, and the front could not be attempted from the soft soggy compost around it, Winkles proposed to hoist Mr. Skeggs to the one above them, which, after dissipating that person's doubts and objections as to his ability so to do (the porter assuring him he could lift two such as he), was agreed to. Thereupon Octavius planted his two feet on Winkles' shoulders, as the latter crouched with his face to the wall, and, steadying himself by his hands against the surface of the building as the porter rose, he reached the window-sill, not, however, before he had more than once protested he was going to fall, and begging Winkles to let him down again.

Cautiously looking around the interior, at first he discerned nothing but heaps of brick and mortar, and large pieces of rusty iron, and, through an opening of the floor, a mass of brickwork

that appeared to have been pulled down to get out the copper boilers, that, however, had not been removed more than a few feet therefrom; but, as his eyes became more familiar with the gloomy place, he became aware of the presence of something creeping on all-fours over to a further corner, where he detected five or six urchins skulking down, hastily concealing something, over which they had doubtless been disputing before they had become aware of the presence of the two men outside.

Mr. Skeggs' *first* impulse, as one having full right and authority so to do, was to demand 'what they were at there,' and then to enjoy their consternation, and the fun that would ensue in their hasty flight; his *next*, suggested by the instinct of self-preservation, was to descend as speedily as consistent with safety. In the attempt, he not only very nearly came to grief himself, but had almost upset his discomfited support, whose arms, in unison with his own, were now alternately employed as shields whereby to defend themselves against half-a-dozen begrimed ragged arabs, who had, unperceived, made their appearance in their rear, and were vigorously employed in making a cockshy of their persons. As there was no other means of ingress on that side, it was evident they had been on the war-path from the first entrance of Mr. Skeggs and his ally on the premises, and had silently watched their movements up to the moment of Mr. Skeggs' espionage through the window; but, as matters at that point looked threatening for their chums inside, busied in secreting some recently-acquired spoil, they considered the proper time had arrived for an attack, by which they hoped to divert the attention of the supposed beaks, and thus afford time for their companions to escape. The rotten potatoes, old shoes, and dead kittens came on so thickly that it was found impossible to maintain their ground, and there was nothing left but to beat a retreat, and recross the broad, stagnant pool, which the porter succeeded in accomplishing with damage to one foot only, necessitating its instant application to some mouldy bunches of refuse hay to rid it of the odorous slush. Mr. Skeggs hesitated to follow, it being impossible to pick his steps as before, and thereupon became the subject of an attack in the rear, the detachment within having mounted the windows, and joined in the fray. Mr. Skeggs felt it was prudent not to hesitate any longer, and, making a desperate leap, happily being less weighty than Winkles, cleared the fragrant spot.

'You young imps, which I'll put two shutters on the eyes of

the first one as I ketches !' shouted the porter, as a rotten turnip struck him on the breast, and he gave chase after the assailants, but whom, being better acquainted with the ins and outs, and withal less scrupulous in the choice of their ground, he did not 'ketch,' at least the boys, but he caught something else ; for, desirous of rendering all the aid he could, Mr. Skeggs, having succeeded in detaching a decayed vegetable from a heap of adhering filth, hurled it at the retreating lads just at the nick when Winkles' body interposed, who, of course, received the charge between his shoulders, thereby causing a halt in that person's pursuit, and eliciting from him the cautionary advice, 'that he'd better look out, and not try that on again.' Urged on by the shouts of their comrades at the windows, the fugitives rallied, and, as the former let themselves down to join in the pelting game, the two men deemed the moment had arrived when it was expedient to retreat, which they did, followed by a volley of the peculiar missiles that seemed indigenous to the soil, and a shout of victory, but which was immediately and untowardly changed into a signal of defeat.

By a wonderful coincidence, as will be readily conceded by such as recall the *retired* habits of such officials, who always manage to appear after the occasion that rendered their appearance needful, a street-keeper had sauntered along the lane, and at that opportune moment his gold-banded hat was protruded round the corner of the alley. Attracted by the noise, he brought his whole person, long blue coat, brass buttons, and stick included, into prominence ; the apparition was sufficient, and its effect equal to what the apparition of the traditional Brewery Ghost might be presumed to have been at the witching hour, the summary flight of the terrified Vandals, who were too well posted in the predilection for boys of such guardians of the streets, to await his descent of the alley, which was very valiantly attempted ; but quickly returning, he made for another part of the lane, in order to cut off their retreat, without waiting to communicate with the two belligerents, who, on finding the coast clear, expressed themselves very strongly as to what they would have done had not they been prevented by the interference of the street-keeper, but which denunciations were interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Hawkes, who, having been delayed longer than anticipated, intimated his wish to proceed immediately to business. After a search through the well-filled bag, he withdrew the papers therefrom, and proceeded to explain that the process they were about

going through was termed, in law, 'an ejectment on a vacant possession,' and that the suit was instituted by one John Doe, against an equally litigious personage called Richard Roe, parties very familiar to the legal profession, every member thereof in the course of his practice having them for clients. The endorsement to the papers read thus: 'Doe *demise* Trelawney, *versus* Roe. To recover a vacant possession.' The explanations by the erudite attorney, being of so technical a nature, were, of course, very edifying to the porter, and interesting to Mr. Skeggs, the latter of whom had been employed the previous day in copying and filling in blanks relative to the whole proceeding, and making extracts from legal precedents.

At the conclusion, and after particular instructions as to their mode of procedure, the clerk and porter prepared for operations, Winkles, however, taking an opportunity to inform Skeggs privately that he 'couldn't see why it was called an injection on a vacant person.'

According to his instructions, Winkles was to go over to the building, and take possession thereof, and retain it until forcibly turned off by Mr. Skeggs. Not inclined to return to the position he had lately occupied, he contrived to cross over and reach the rear of the premises, out of sight of Mr. Hawkes. After a careful survey of the inside through an open doorway, he placed a plank, lying just within, against the wall, and climbed up to the window above, out of which, like the majority, the sashes had been removed, and, hoisting himself thereon, perched on the sill with his legs dangling outside; a precaution he deemed it wise to take, lest any of his late assailants should yet be lingering about the premises. From this elevation he sat quietly contemplating the neighbouring back-yards, until he was interrupted by a shout from the impatient attorney, requesting to be informed what had become of him, and if he was ever going to be ready. Not aware that it was necessary to announce his success, Mr. Winkles was taken by surprise, and, letting go his hold, had nearly tipped over into the interior, but recovered himself in time to sing out, in response to a repetition of the attorney's demand, 'Ay, sir; ready this half-hour.' Which was not true, seeing that not more than nine or ten minutes had elapsed since he disappeared from Mr. Hawkes' view. Foiled in his attempts to cross the spongy, defiling soil, the attorney directed Mr. Skeggs to make the effort, and to get over somehow, and complete the process by turning Mr. Winkles out of his easily-acquired estate. But Mr. Skeggs

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did not find it any more practicable to gain the other side than his employer, though repeatedly incited to a fresh attempt by that worthy, who expressed himself as astonished at his clerk's stupidity. By the aid of a few stones, he hoped to accomplish it, but as a solitary one was all that could be found, after muttering a wonder at that fellow Winkles choosing that side, he made a spring, and landed with one foot on firm ground, the other sinking in a soft spot, in his effort to extricate which he left his shoe sticking therein, and hopping off, looked back with a rueful countenance. By a little manœuvring, however, he managed to regain it, and, turning the corner of the old brewery, discovered Mr. Winkles on his perch. In no very amiable state of mind, Octavius demanded 'what he was doing up there?' and requested him to come down at once, and 'let's get out of this beastly hole.'

'Come down !' said the porter. 'Now, ain't you a nice lawyer ? Didn't ye hear what he told me ?'

'Come down,' said Skeggs, 'and no humbugging. See the mess I'm in,' looking at his soiled shoes.

'I shan't !' said the porter. 'Warn't I told to stay here till I were turned off, which is what I'd like to see the fellow as 'ud do it.'

'Well, I'm going to ; haven't I come on purpose ?—only I can't reach ye, but that's nothing to do with it.'

'You ! you ! I'd like to see you do it !' and he commenced kicking his heels against the wall, evidently enjoying his immunity from interference.

Mr. Skeggs looked at him despairingly, and the question arose in his mind whether he ought to give up sugar and milk for such a perverse fellow ; then, making an effort at persuasion, said, in a coaxing tone, 'Come now, Winkles, there's a good fellow, jump down ; you don't understand.'

'Don't I, though ? aint I green ?' and he laid his finger by the side of his nose, and winked.

'That's just what you are,' said Skeggs, resuming his angry tone, 'cocked up there like an owl in a ivy-bush, making such a donkey of yourself.'

'I say, don't put my dander up, or I'll come down to you pretty quick.'

'I wish you would !—keeping me here all day.'

'Mr. Skeggs,' shouted a too familiar voice, 'are you coming back to-day ?'

'There, now, hear that. Now come down, that's a good chap, Winkles, and don't be getting a fellow into trouble.'

'Which is what you want to do with me. You'll have to rise early afore that.'

'Mr. Skeggs! Skeggs! Skeggs!' reiterated the same voice, in an angry tone.

Skeggs was bewildered, and, making a desperate bound, he leaped up and seized one of the porter's feet, who, not anticipating the movement, lost his equilibrium and came down with a thud. Both rolled over, narrowly escaping being hit by some loose stones that fell from under the window-sill. They were not long in regaining their feet. Skeggs was not damaged beyond a scratch or two, and a slight pain in his shoulder, caused by the extra strain on his arm; but, observing the storm gathering on the porter's face, he deemed it advisable to retire without loss of time, which he did, pursued by the irate Winkles, who had evidently got the worst of it, since, happily for Skeggs, his progress was retarded by a limp, occasioned by the strain on his ankle.

'What in the name of fortune's a matter?' said Mr. Hawkes, preparing for a run, under the impression that his employees had seen something that it was not advisable to stay to inspect, as both came dashing over the intervening slush without waiting to pick their steps, as on their passage across. 'What is it?'

'Oh, nothing, sir!' said Skeggs, as he recovered his breath, at the same time moving round so as to place the attorney between himself and the incensed Winkles.

'Stand off!' said Mr. Hawkes, 'you smell. Hurt yourself, porter?'

'Oh, it's nothing much, only let him look out; if it warn't for you, I'm blowed if I'd stand it.'

'Come, no quarrelling, Winkles; it's not Christian-like. He turned you off, I suppose.'

'Yes; but he didn't do it fair, which I'd like to see him try it again.'

'Oh, it's all fair, and don't require to be done again,' said the attorney, not aware to what he was referring. 'It's all fair; we've got legal possession. I shan't want you any more, Winkles; there's your money,'—and he handed him the stipulated amount, on which he spat for luck, and limped off, bestowing a look on the lawyer's clerk that implied he would like to settle with him too before he went, which, as he departed without offering to carry the green bag, he in part effected, at

least, as far as the milk and sugar question was concerned, which in Mr. Skeggs' mind was thenceforth set at rest.

As Mr. Hawkes had other engagements, after giving instructions as to the next course, he left his clerk to return to the office alone; whereupon it occurred to the latter that it would not be amiss to overtake the porter, and endeavour to mollify his wrath, his good offices being too much in request to render this a matter of indifference. Winkles was no unimportant appendage to Barge Yard. To the merchants and others doing business there, he was, of course, a necessity; but to the clerks and warehousemen he was even more indispensable, his services being often needed to watch whilst some private and pressing duty called them to absent themselves from their offices or warehouses, on which occasions he stood sentinel to assure callers of the prompt return, in five minutes, of the absentee; or, at other times, would perform a rapid movement from the corner of the yard, up which he raced, and shouted at an open doorway that he saw somebody's governors rounding the end of the Bury on their return from 'Change, whereat half-a-dozen young gentlemen came clattering down the stairs, and disturbed the solitariness of the place by describing several lineal, diagonal, and other lines across and up or down the yard, disappearing at various open doors; in the offices connected with which, the said governors, on entering, would find them so deeply absorbed in their employments as to be unconscious of their appearance, until accosted or otherwise made aware thereof. But an equally important duty was performed at the lunch hour, when Winkles seemed to have changed places with the pot-boys, as he ran backwards and forwards with the tankards of ale or porter, with the modicum of bread and cheese, at times varied by stale pastry from the Poultry. As for such services he received small pecuniary acknowledgments, it formed quite an item in his weekly account.

With such considerations, therefore, to move him in the direction indicated, abetted by the weighty one in his hand, Mr. Skeggs hastened after the porter with such speed as his encumbrance would permit. It is doubtful, however, notwithstanding Winkle's damaged ankle, if he would have been overtaken, the crowded thoroughfare at that time of day rendering Skeggs' progress still more difficult, had it not so happened that the object of his chase had been arrested in his progress by the odoriferous vapours that greeted his olfactories, as they came

steaming up from an area on his road, in the window above which had just been placed a large hot plum-pudding, through the top whereof a skewer was stuck, with a dingy piece of paper thereon, announcing that it could be partaken of at the moderate charge of one penny a slice, while a similar paper on another provoking edible intimated that hot joints, soups, pies, puddings, etc., were about being served up at the low charge of fourpence a plate.

'Don't that look moreish?' exclaimed Octavius, somewhat winded, as he came up to the fascinated porter, and deposited the bag at his feet, over the area.

'Don't it just!' returned the porter, experiencing a sensation so exciting as to completely overcome that occasioned by the late mishap, and, with their eyes feasting on the contents of the window, the two continued to gaze, until they were attracted by the artistic manipulation of a very stout man, habited in white apron and sleeves, inside the shop behind the counter, who, wielding an enormous carving-knife and fork, was shaving off slices from a juicy, smoking round of beef, of extra size, with which he was filling the several plates of the customers crowding the place.

During this interesting performance, Skegg's disengaged hand was instinctively diving to the bottom of his trousers' pockets, and so were both the porter's, but the latter appeared more successful than the former, as he drew therefrom a piece of brown-looking stuff, off the end of which he bit a small piece, and then returned it to the same place, whilst Octavius' hand returned as it went. Letting go the string of the bag, he continued the search until he succeeded in detecting a sixpence that he knew he had somewhere about him, but that had got through a hole in the corner of his waistcoat pocket, out of which he drew it. A further investigation led to the discovery of three-halfpence, but by this time the gathering crowd at the window compelled them to move towards the door, to the greater irritation of their palates, especially the porter's, whose side-glance had detected Mr. Skegg's movements.

'You haven't got a ha'penny, have you, Winkles?'

The porter went through a very expeditious scrutiny of the contents of his pockets, and from amongst a miscellaneous assortment of odds and ends extracted the sum named.

'That's it,' said Skeggs, taking it out of his hand. 'Now I'll tell you what, I'm 'nation peckish; ain't you?'

Winkles assured him he was,—extravagantly so; their morning's work had put quite an edge on his appetite.

'I'll stand treat a plate apiece, if you'll pay for a pot of half-and-half.'

The proposition was a very favourable one, and as Winkles had a private pocket in which his silver currency was kept (it had never been necessary to provide for a more valuable coin), the offer was accepted without hesitation, and, taking up the bag, he followed Skeggs into the shop, where they seated themselves at an empty table, curtained off from outsiders.

'What'll ye take, gen'l'men?' said the perspiring individual, from whom a mixed odour proceeded, and who had only recently ascended from below, doing duty by turns as assistant cook and waiter.

'What'll ye have, Winkles?' said Mr. Skeggs.

'Me! Oh, I'll 'ave anything you likes.'

'Soup, ham, beef—corned, roast, or boiled,—mutton, and vegetables,' said the waiter in a breath.

'What's the soup a plate, and the beef?'

'Soup a penny—beef fourpence.'

'Couldn't you give the two for fourpence?'

'Couldn't possibly.'

'Well, then, I'll have—I'll have roast beef.' And thereupon, in a second, the waiter returned with what was said to be the article ordered, with a couple of potatoes and salt.

'Bring me a plate o' soup with dollops, which is a penny,' said the porter.

'Tuppence with dollops, penny without, sir.' And in another second a plate of the article named was placed in front of Mr. Winkles, whose moderation called forth Mr. Skeggs' remonstrance, as he beheld the washy concoction, insisting that 'that wouldn't do him!'

'Oh, I'm going to have two plates,' said the porter, stirring it up to ascertain its consistency, half-regretting he had not ordered a more substantial article. The half-and-half, as it came foaming over the pewter, next engaged their attention, and was mutually extolled as *bon*.

'Queer-looking stuff!' said the porter, chasing a small piece of something round his second plateful with the pewter spoon.

'Ah, that's why I like it off a joint! You see, if a fellow knew all he ate (but a fellow don't know all he eats, especially in soup,—how many dish-cloths it took to make it strong enough,

sides well-picked bones and leavings),—I say, if a fellow knew all he ate, he'd live without eating.' Mr. Skeggs was poking fun at the porter, as he watched the chase round the plate. 'What! is it a roach?—eh, Winks? Look at that,' and he plunged the two prongs of his black-handled fork into the last piece of meat on his plate, and held the weaseny morsel for the porter's inspection, his own mouth in a watery state at the tantalizing delay. 'Can you tell me what that is?'

Winkles was just then having a hard time of it, endeavouring to reduce the questionable dollop into a state adapted for deglutition. Seeing which, and unable longer to postpone operations, Mr. Skeggs conveyed his own tempting piece to its destined receptacle, and was going through the process of mastication, when the porter, having got through his occupation, looked at Octavius, and responded very gravely, 'Know'd what that were, did you say? yes, a coorse I do,—it are a bit o' that old hoss as died o' the staggers, as I seed a-passing here the day afore yesterday.' And then he lifted his plate, and emptied the remains of the soup into his mouth, chuckling at Mr. Skeggs' dismay, as he stopped his chewing, and looked over at the porter, who purposely avoided his gaze.

Skeggs' mouth was too full to allow of any interrogation; consequently a debate ensued between the upper and lower man, as to the advisability of proceeding any further, but before he had time to arbitrate, the lower man very unceremoniously decided the issue, by withdrawing it beyond further dispute.

'There, now,' said Octavius, making a wry face, 'you've been and spoiled my appetite.'

'I rayther think you've gone and done that yourself,' said the porter, eyeing the empty plate. And thereupon each took a look into the pewter, but as that was done also, they settled with the waiter, and wended their way towards Barge Yard at a quick pace, lest Mr. Hawkes should arrive before them, the porter continuing to take charge of the bag the whole distance, a proceeding that should have recalled the milk and sugar question for further consideration, but it did not.

Before concluding this chapter, some insight into the circumstances that led to the above legal process is necessary, in order to our being kept in line with the progress of affairs connected with Messrs. Scarr and Lejette, under the able conduct of the Messrs. Hawkes and Son, aided by the no less *able*, if not

talented, Octavius Skeggs. Urged by the importunity of these trustworthy trustees to realize certain available portions of the estate, it had been agreed, at a subsequent consultation to the one last narrated, that an effort should be made to dispose of the old building and premises above referred to, which had long been unoccupied, the tenant having disappeared prior to the execution of the trust. To obtain possession thereof, under the circumstances, the foregoing was the result of some anterior proceedings instituted according to law, in such cases made and provided.

Pending this course, and by way of gaining time (a consideration not quite accordant to usage, and withal not so paying, but absolutely requisite to meet the pressing demands of Mr. Hawkes' clients, not to mention any need of his own), the property had been advertised for public sale, and placed in the hands of a well-known land-agent and auctioneer. The elaborate and ornate description of the premises, as drawn up by that individual, had metamorphosed them into something bearing a strong resemblance to an ancient but magnificent castle, and which a small outlay only would readily convert into an elegant town mansion. It was situated in the centre of a populous commercial neighbourhood, abutting on the beautiful lane known by the name of Golden, so termed from the exceeding value of the hereditaments and premises situated thereon, and in the delightful vicinage of Barbican, within easy reach of the public institutions of St. Luke's and the New Prison, and only a few minutes' walk from Smithfield, and in the singular locality of three cross streets, namely White Cross, Red Cross, and Cow Cross, ancient landmarks of historic events. As to its salubrity, its isolated position rendered it peculiar in that respect. In fine, an opportunity of acquiring so eligible a property rarely occurred.

As a proof of the felicitous combination of the ideal with the real, and the beauty and force of language in their picturesque delineation, the rush to the auctioneer's rooms for catalogues, and visits to the premises to obtain a view thereof *prior* to the day of sale, were unprecedented. Even Captain Lejette was so enraptured as he perused the copy sent for his edification, that he was thrown into a paroxysm, and was with difficulty persuaded to relinquish the idea of sending printed circulars to several of the nobility, as well as merchant princes of the city, who, he felt assured, had only to be made aware of such a property being in

the market, to obtain from them offers of unheard-of amounts for its possession. Amongst those who went to obtain a sight of the Eldorado was the Captain himself, but, after a whole afternoon spent in the search thereof, he returned unsuccessful, his extraordinary inquiries having impressed the persons inquired of that he must have recently escaped from the St. Luke's referred to in the advertisement.

The sale, however, came off, about half-a-dozen persons from the neighbourhood attending, when it was knocked down to a soap-boiler doing business in the locality; and though at a sum vastly below the expectations of Captain Lejette, who attributed it to his advice relative to the circulars not having been adopted, yet at a sum exceeding either the auctioneer's or the attorney's anticipations.

Nothing now remained but to hasten the completion of the purchase by the execution of the necessary deeds, which, after the needful conferences, attendances, letter-writing, and other procedure, essential and non-essential, otherwise than as affording occasions for entries of three and fourpence, six and eightpence, and so on, in Mr. Hawkes' day-book, were declared ready for signatures.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FLAWS AGAIN.

THE day appointed for the execution of the conveyance by all the parties concerned had arrived. The surgeon had more than once found it difficult to ward off the importunities of Mrs. Scarr, whose curiosity was unduly awakened by his unusual amiability and attention. Even the austere assistant was somewhat disturbed by the eccentric movements of his chief, and, as he sallied forth from the shop with a nod of recognition and the unwonted information that he would not be long absent, entertained serious misgivings as to his being quite himself. Nor was Captain Lejette less moved than the surgeon,—he had risen half-an-hour earlier than ordinary, and completed his toilet with such expedition, that for once he was at the attorney's office only ten minutes after time ; whilst the conduct of demure Mr. Hawkes proved almost too much for his sensitive clerk, his urbanity and unnatural liveliness having very nearly betrayed that functionary into taking advantage thereof to ask an increase of salary, but which, on 'second thoughts,' he decided to defer until after the morning's conference, the wisdom of which decision, although founded on premises popularly pronounced the best, was in this instance, as will be seen, controverted by the equally wise and conflicting adage 'that delays are dangerous,' which might be supplemented by any quantity of such wise and contradictory saws, tending to dogmatize 'the uncertainty of all events save death,' but which latter thought just then, doubtless, did not occur to any of the parties interested in the morning's delightfully anticipated proceedings.

Nevertheless, the axiom was verified,—that is, as regards the unreliability of unaccomplished events, and another illustration afforded of the correctness of the old lady's advice, 'not to reckon the chickens before they are hatched,' even though the

shell may be chipped,—for, in lieu of Mr. Jenkins, the purchaser of the old brewery, and his solicitor, putting in an appearance, a communication was delivered into Mr. Skeggs' hands by a messenger from the office of the latter. After a little by-chaff, the said messenger being a member of the same fraternity of lawyers' clerks, he mysteriously insinuated (lawyers' clerks are professionally mysterious) that Skeggs' pious governor would find a dose there that would probably prove as effective as any of the surgeon's black draughts, and then went off with an impenetrable air, utterly impervious to his fellow-clerk's urgent request for further particulars.

Mr. Skeggs lost no time in transferring the letter to Mr. Hawkes' custody, who, with Messrs. Scarr and Lejette, was impatiently awaiting the arrival of the purchaser and his solicitor. After apologizing for not earlier informing Mr. Hawkes, the letter went on to state that their client had been advised not to complete his contract, unless the vendors were prepared to comply with the conditions of sale, which the solicitors insisted were not met by the title offered.

Whether the purchaser's solicitors had, as their letter implied, really discovered a defect in the title, or that the soap-boiler, in calmer moments, had rued his bargain, was not apparent. The latter surmise was not improbable, as during the bidding, incited by the glowing terms in which the auctioneer continued to set forth the many advantages, not otherwise discoverable, together with the prospectively enhanced value in another year, as well as pressed by a rival tradesman, of whose competition the said auctioneer had adroitly taken advantage to run the bidding up, the purchaser had gone considerably beyond the amount he had intended.

Had a bombshell fallen through the ceiling into the midst of the three worthies, it could not have created a greater consternation. In vain Mr. Hawkes protested that there could be no valid objection raised to the title, in verification of which he produced various authorities from the Law Reports affecting sales of property, titles, and other precedents, all of which, he asserted, bore on the case in point, although what that point was had not been avowed in the communication.

'Bedad, that's all very foine, Hawkes!' said the military man, 'and no doubt all's true that you've been reading, though I must say it's positively incomprehensible. But I want you to show me the flaw; where's the flaw?' Thereupon he took up the

parchments, and, inserting his glass in the usual fixture, ran his eye over the sheets as he turned them over.

'There's none,' said the attorney, 'and I defy the most astute practitioner to discover one.'

'Then why does he say so? Didn't you tell me you submitted the paper to a specially clever fellow, the what-ye-call-'em—adjutant?'

'Serjeant. Yes, most assuredly, and there's not a loophole to creep through.'

'But what do they say,—what do they say,' said the surgeon in a sharp tone, 'is a matter? Tell us in plain English.'

'They have not said,—they could not say,—I defy them to say. It's the cavilling of the carnal mind that cannot discern the things that are right!' exclaimed the attorney, with unusual force, animated by vexation and the fear lest his client's faith in his legal acumen should become shaken.

The surgeon took up the parchment, with the vain attempt to decipher the German text characters in which it was engrossed; but, unable to get beyond the commencement,—'This Indenture,'—threw it down in disgust.

'Scarr,' said the Captain, as he noted the surgeon's action, 'the lawyer that could read that puzzle, much more find a hole in it, must be related to a Philadelphia genius, or the old boy himself. What language is it, Hawkes?—double Dutch?' He stooped down to examine again.

'Ulloa—stop! You said there was not a flaw in it; here it is—I've got it, by Jove! I'm the best lawyer of the three. Who the mischief did that?'

The alarmed men quickly rose, and, leaning over the table, looked at the parchment in the direction pointed out by Lejette, who, with an air of superior sagacity, was tracing out some elliptic cuttings at the top of the first sheet of parchment, extending its whole length in wavy undulations.

'That's it, you see, that's it! eh, Doctor? And you did not see that before, Hawkes? By Jove, we're floored!' and thereupon he strode to the other end of the room and back, in a somewhat elated state at his discovery.

Mr. Hawkes had seized the document and taken it to the window, completely dumbfounded at the asserted discovery, and commenced reading it in a low tone: "'This Indenture, made this —— day of —— in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and twenty-five, between"—Oh, I see what you

mean !' and he smiled a compassionate smile at this presumed display of the military man's ignorance of legal procedure. 'You are under a mistake, Captain ; it's no omission ; those blanks are left purposely, to be filled up at the time of execution.'

'Execution ! execution ! That time appears to have arrived, with the added privilege of being drawn and quartered, or strung up for the special amusement of others, as a trio of long-eared noodles,' exclaimed the surgeon ironically.

'Then I vote that Hawkes swings first. But I'd like to know how you are going to fill those notches in,' said the Captain, pointing the lawyer's attention to the indentations.

'Oh, I see now !—he ! he !—I see now what you mean,—those indents. My dear sir, that's all right,' said the attorney, with a feeling of relief. 'That's done on purpose. Don't you see it commences with the words, "This Indenture ;" and how could it be an indenture without it was, and those pieces cut out to make it so ?'

The Captain was posed, then responded, 'Do you mean to tell me you cut those out of the top on purpose ?'

'Most undoubtedly I do.'

'And that's law ?—good law ?—that will stand muster ?' The lawyer nodded his assent to each of these demands. 'Well, then, I give in. What a nameless art ! I should not be at all surprised if we all have our tops indented, as you call it, before we get through with this business. What say you, Doctor ? You're as sapient-looking there, old boy, as Pallas herself, though not quite so pretty.'

'I am waiting until you have exhausted your surplus wit.'

'Good, good, Master Sawbones ! Well, now, we'll listen to your sage utterances ; between law and physic we'll be edified exceedingly.'

'Mr. Hawkes, what's our next course ?' said the surgeon, addressing himself to that gentleman, without condescending to notice the inopportune sallies of his co-trustee. 'Can't we insist on the purchase being completed ?'

'Certainly,' replied the lawyer, drawing out one of the auctioneer's printed hand-bills descriptive of the property, and containing the conditions of sale, and pointing to the outside page, on which was a printed agreement to the effect that the purchaser at the public sale bound himself to comply with the within conditions, and which agreement had been duly signed by that party, and witnessed. Mr. Hawkes read the agreement carefully

over, and expressed himself in strong terms that language could not be plainer, adding that nothing therefore remained, if he still declined, but to take measures to compel him; in which view, as his clients concurred, he continued:

'Then I understand it to be your wish, gentlemen, that proceedings be immediately instituted to enforce this agreement?'

That course being decided on, a conversation ensued on other matters connected with the estate; after which Messieurs Scarr and Lejette rose to depart, in a very different state of mind from that in which they had met.

'I say, Hawkes,' said the Captain, reopening the door of the office as they stepped out, and putting his head in, 'I thought I'd just draw your attention to the circumstance that there's no cuttings,—what do ye call 'em?—indents to the bill-heads;' then, dropping his voice to a whisper, 'I say, ole fellow, have you got any silver about you? Save my going home for it.'

'I haven't a farthing *about* me,' replied the attorney, laying a stress on the word 'about' for conscience' sake, the cash being in the japanned box, in a drawer.

'Oh, no consequence. Make him come down as quick as possible, for I'm plaguey short of cash.' Then raising his voice, 'You notice there's no cuttings to the bill-head,—no consequence, I hope; if it is, cut it out like you did the other, nobody will be any the wiser.' Having thus shocked the attorney, he hastened after the surgeon, whom he overtook at the end of the yard.

'Ulloa, Scarr, don't be in such a confounded hurry. I say, ole boy, you haven't a little loose change about you?'

'Oh, very well,' growled the surgeon, in no humour for any liberties after his great disappointment; 'in that case I'm hard up.'

'He! he! You're always ready with your dry answers. No, but have you, though?'

'Oh, have I? I thought you said I had not.'

'Well, you know, that's the polite way of saying, have you—eh, Doctor?'

'Yes; and I am going to take care of it.'

'Oh, that's right; cos I was going to ask if you'd lend me a trifle till to-morrow.'

'To-morrow! To-morrow never comes; ask Hawkes if it does,' growled the surgeon, who was soon beyond reach of further importunity by the needy applicant, in whom a perceptible change was taking place since our first introduction to him;



'He advance! I wish you may get it; more likely t'other way.'

'Girl got the chinks? Looking out that way myself; can you recommend me?'

'Take my advice, Jack, don't marry for money,—repent it all your life.'

'Live on love, eh? and when old Poverty knocks at the door, keep the window barred for fear she'd fly out.'

Mr. Skeggs was about to remonstrate at such gross views, when the conversation in the attorney's room became more animated, and warned him not to speak so loud.

'His reverence in?' said Jack, lowering his voice. 'Penitents at confession!'

'What's up this morning?' said Skeggs; 'what brought you here?'

'Oh, shop!' replied his friend, drawing out a pocket-book, from the papers in which he selected a long strip of printed paper, purporting to issue from the Court of King's Bench, and signed by a judge thereof. 'That's for you, I think, isn't it?' reading the pencil writing in the margin, "'Bodkins—ats—Figgins," yes, that's it,' and returning the book to his pocket, he expressed a hope that Skeggs was not concerned in it, 'though of course, when a chap gets bothered at the heart, it does at times confuzzle the head.'

'Concerned in what?' said Octavius, running his eye quickly over the printed slip, but dwelling only on the written portion thereof, the document purporting to be a summons to show cause why the rejoinder in the above-named action, put in by the plaintiff, should not be set aside, and judgment go by default, or issue be joined on the plea, the said rejoinder being irregular. 'By jingo! what's a matter? where is it wrong?' He commenced rummaging through the papers in his desk for the draft, or rough copy, which, having found, he commenced reading, overlooked by his brother clerk.

'There, that's it that you just read; it's *nor* there, but you've got *or* in the original.' Mr. Skeggs read it again, but could not detect anything amiss.

'Why, don't you see, "or" is no answer? That don't deny the special averment of the plea.'

'Don't it? I don't see that,' said Skeggs, looking at the clerk inquiringly; 'but what's to be done? Can't we get over it?'

'Oh, we'll shut you up, that's all. You've lost the game.'

‘Ain’t your governor sharp? Why, he’s pulling us up every step.’

‘Sharp! I b’lieve ye; he’d twig a cleric a mile off,—he’s got a mania for it,—and when he’s found one, he’s good-natured all the rest of the day,—which he’s not at any other time.’

‘That won’t be the case with my chief when he finds this out.’

‘No; ‘cos it’s found out for him, and is against him. I tell ye, though, it’s a grand thing to know how to get the principal into humour when you want to.’ In which assertion Mr. Skeggs so fully coincided, that, hoping the same plan might be adopted with equal success with his own boss, he begged his friend Jack to explain how they did it.

‘How? why, I’ll tell you. When we all feel plaguey tired, and want to get away early, or anything of that sort,—to meet our lady-loves, eh, Skeggs?’

‘Go on, now, and no larking.’

‘Well, the first thing we do is to draw lots who’s to be the martyr, and make the clerical, as they term it, and as soon as that’s settled, one of us—not the one, mind you, that has to father the error—takes the paper in to the governor to ask some question about it,—some puzzler, any other wouldn’t do, or he’d take us for fools,—and then he growls, and wants to know if he can’t be let alone five minutes, but he goes on reading, and has just got his finger and thumb ready to turn over, when down his eye comes right pounce on the last line, and there it is. It makes a chap a little nervous as he’s getting near it, I tell you, and requires practice; a fresh hand would never stand it. You’ve got to look very innocent, fear he’d twig; then watch his eye, and now dodge, for first thing, it don’t matter whether it’s a Chancery draft of a hundred folios or a brief of fifty, or anything else, bang it goes right across the room. That’s the first act.’

‘That’s a queer game,’ said Skeggs; ‘I don’t think I’d like to play at that.’

‘O yes, you would. Listen,—it’s nothing when you’re used to it, but then you have to get used to it. Next scene: stand by for a blowing up; don’t say a word or you’ll spoil it, but let him rip out, and sometimes he does come it, I tell you; you’d have to hold on to the table when he’s done, look very much hurt, and say you hadn’t anything to do with it. Tear goes the rope, and you can hear the bell galloping away at an awful rate. The other two chaps know what’s coming, yet sometimes they

fairly jump off their stools. Well, the wrong one enters, for, you see, he never asks who did it, and don't he pitch into him before he's well-nigh through the door, and when he's had his dose, *he* ups like the other, and very indignantly wants to know what he's done, and thereupon, as ordered, picks up the papers and brings them to him, and he reads the paragraph, and then follows a sermon as would beat your dominie hollow, how he'd be ruined if it wasn't that nothing escapes his eye, then winds up by asking how he came to do it, when the chap ups and tells him he didn't do it. By this he begins to calm down and feel rather queer, and then follows a homily that would do you good, about the sad effects of negligence and carelessness, and so on, and that the one that did it,—who, 'tween you and I, is enjoying himself at our expense in the other room,—is always making mistakes, and will get him into a terrible scrape before he stops. Then he tells us that'll do, and we retire, leaving the door ajar; and now, don't we give it to the t'other, so as he can hear us, and then get sulky, and don't speak. Act third—closing scene: the tyrant melts. Hear him moving about his room, door opens wider, and putting his head in, says, in a mild voice, he doesn't want us any more, no need to stay any longer if we've done,—that's what I call true repentance,—and of course we don't wait to be told that twice, for fear he'd repent again. That's as good as a play, ain't it, Skeggs?

Although interested during the recital of the above, at the conclusion Mr. Skeggs' thoughts immediately recurred to the paper in his hand, and with a long face he demanded what was to be done, for this was not to be got over in that way. The other did not see why he should fret about it; he always took such things coolly himself; they could only lose the suit, and each pay costs.

'I say,' said Skeggs, 'couldn't I come round and alter it, and just say nothing about it?'

'Alter it! that's very much like a whale. Ain't we verdant? It's too late, and, 'sides, do you think Hawkes would do so? No, sir, I bet ye. Let it slide, Skeggs; what matters? It can't be helped. I've done as bad afore now.' But it did matter; in a hundred other such cases he might have felt, from habit, as indifferent as the young clerk, but Figgins was a particular friend, one in whom he had now a peculiar interest, very peculiar, and that extended still more peculiarly towards the members of Mr. Figgins' family. It could not, therefore, do otherwise than seriously affect Mr. Skeggs' mind, even had an occurrence of the

previous evening, now so powerfully stimulating him, not occurred until a subsequent date. However, to his legal friend he only avowed the minor consideration.

'It will play the mischief with Hawkes, and I'll be sure to come in for it.'

'Oh, if that's all, 'tween you and I, he'll get through it; he's too wide awake to be caught napping. I could do it myself.'

'Could ye?' said Skeggs eagerly; 'how?'

'Oh, come now, that wouldn't be fair to put you up to dodges against our own client. Do you think it would, now? and, as I say, Hawkes is too good a saint not to see his way out.'

'Well, then, it can be no harm telling me,—it'll be doing me a good turn, and he'll think I'm sharp.' After a short hesitation, backed by a further appeal for this proof of friendship, and promising never to hint that he had told him, the other informed him that his wisest course would be to take out a counter summons for leave to commence *de novo*.

'That's it!—I wish I had your nouse,' said Skeggs, quite revived, and striking the clerk with his fist, but to whom the course was not a novel one, although it had not just then occurred to him, but which may be attributable to the state of mind above alluded to, and to be presently explained.

The clerk was about again to enjoin silence with reference to his suggestion, when a heavy knock at the door prevented him, and Mr. Figgins himself made his appearance, whereupon the young gentleman took his leave.

'Talk of the old boy and he's sure to appear,' said Mr. Skeggs as he shook hands very heartily with the fresh arrival.

'Eh? what's a matter, Mr. Skeggs? Talking o' me? Here I ham; settled my business, and got the money, which is werry acceptable, as I never were harder hup for the dibs. 'Joy yourselves at the Wells last night? Araby's been doin' nothing but talk about it all the morning, and putting Jake through the dagger part. But you didn't hanswer my querry about the haction?'

'It's going on, sir.'

'Eh, going on still? hain't it got no funder nor that?—which is w'ere it were the last time.'

'Oh, it's on a good way since you were last here.'

'Which way's it on, now? hain't it time for to stop?'

'Not yet, though Mrs. Bodkins' solicitor wants to stop it.' Mr. Skeggs' thoughts recurred to the very small instrument

lying on his desk, by which the stoppage was sought to be effected.

‘Do ‘e want to stop? Then vy don’t ‘ee let ‘im?’

‘Let it stop and you lose your money?’

‘Eh, is that the vay he’s for stopping it? Don’t do it, Tavy.’

‘Certainly not, Mr. Figgins; he’s pretty knowing, though.’

‘Hain’t he? hain’t he cute, now? but ‘Awkes is up to him, eh?’

‘He’s trying to get us into a corner, but he’ll find his mistake.’

‘Is he? and do he know you knows it?’ said Figgins. Mr. Skeggs closed his eyes and opened them again, whereupon Mr. Figgins winked.

‘He don’t know where we are, I can tell him,’—Mr. Skeggs was thinking of his counter summons,—‘we ain’t asleep.’

‘Don’t ‘e now? Vere are we?’ said Figgins, drawing closer to Skeggs, lest the party alluded to should by any possibility be within hearing; but the latter only replied by placing his forefinger on his lip, and staring very hard at the door between his room and the attorney’s. Mr. Figgins looked in the same direction, impressed by the depth of meaning in these expressive actions.

‘Ah, you’re right; I twig. He’ll find his match, eh, Mr. Skeggs?’

‘B’lieve ye; gives a sight of trouble though, slippery as an eel.’

‘Don’t say so! Vell, don’t let him slip, take a grip on him, Tavy.’

‘He’ll be clever if he slips through our hands.’

‘Sorry to put you to so much trouble! you didn’t oughter be.’

‘Don’t mention it, sir; can’t be helped.’

‘I’ll remember you when you gets it; and I’ll owe Mr. Hawkes more nor I can pay.’

Mr. Skeggs was about to acknowledge his promise in regard to himself, but was withheld by the last remark, that suggested such a formidable bill of costs as the result of these tortuous proceedings, that he feared Mr. Figgins was speaking prophetically.

Having received so satisfactory an account of the progress of his suit, and being in a hurry, Mr. Figgins decided it was unnecessary to await the disengagement of the attorney, in which the clerk heartily concurred, in no way anxious that Mr. Figgins should be present at the anticipated scene. However, his mind

thus quieted on business matters, as he reached the door to depart, he indulged in a little bit of pleasantry, and made Mr. Skeggs laugh as heartily as he could with the present weight on his mind, by informing him 'he was a sly dog,' and demanding 'what he was arter last night? 'spect he'd never forget that play,' and then, adding, 'he'd let somebody know as he seed him this morning,' retired.

This little sally, awakening such pleasant memories, soon operated very potently on Mr. Skeggs' spirits, and caused a temporary diversion from more serious matters, and thereupon he began to revel again in the blissful past, as he had been doing prior to the announcement made by the clerk, ever since the occurrence; that is, during his waking moments, although it might with equal propriety be said he had even done so when not awake, as it had formed the subject of his dreams during the night.

The event alluded to as connected with the previous evening's visit to 'Sadler's Wells Theatre,' Mr. Skeggs might, using Mr. Figgins' assertion, well declare *he'd* never forget. It was an eventful night in the history of that gentleman, and had an important bearing on the future of his life; but perhaps can be better appreciated by describing it in its relation to, and effect on one equally interested as himself,—indeed, without whose hearty concurrence it could not have occurred,—and who, from the quizzing of the aforesaid clerk, it is apparent was a lady, and from the subsequent badinage of Mr. Figgins must have been well known to the latter; in fact, it was no other, as the reader is quite prepared to learn, than Miss Arabella Figgins herself.

As on her arrival home all were retiring to bed, her exuberant spirits were kept in restraint; but, unable to repress them any longer, she was the first to rise, and disturb the rest by her bustle and noise in the unusually early performance of her morning's domestic duties. It was not long before she attracted the attention of the household, whom for a time she threw off the scent by her animated description of the play, which she so persisted in, to the exclusion of every other topic, that her father more than once reproved her unwonted garrulity, and Mrs. F. was constrained to question the propriety of going to theatres, when it affected children in the way it had done Bell, who, from the way she was going about the house singing, she feared was entertaining some idea of 'coming out' herself; and finally, as

even this failed to stay the young lady's exhilaration, expressed an opinion that it was not right to go on that way before the children, who, nevertheless, were heartily enjoying the racy descriptions, and on every occasion of an interruption therein, by a momentary attention to her housework, would run off with the broom or duster to win her back to her recitals. But, however these latter might be amused, it was not long before some significant nods and intelligent looks were being interchanged between the two elders, terminating in the very sage conclusion, that the performance inside Sadler's Wells had less to do with Miss Figgins' state of mind than the performance outside. This conclusion come to, it is not at all surprising that, throughout the remainder of the day the young lady was plied with many questions, her explicit replies to which would either confirm such surmises or remove her mamma's suspicions; but beyond very provokingly evasive responses, nothing satisfactory could be elicited. However, so far from abating Mrs. Figgins' impressions, by the time the evening arrived she was able to assure Mr. F., from a comparison of their daughter's proceedings that day with her own well-remembered nervous excitement on the day after he popped the question, a similar state of things was just then operating to the advantage or disadvantage of Arabella,—an assurance that was soon after confirmed, thereby affording proof, if such were needed, of the superior penetration of the sex in affairs of the heart.

How it happened, though not circumstantially or consecutively related, yet, by putting together sundry scraps of information subsequently drawn out of her, or volunteered to her mamma and a young lady confidant, of whom there is always one on such occasions, it leaked out that during Mr. Skeggs' and Miss Figgins' return from the play, whilst rehearsing to each other such incidents therein as had particularly impressed them, Octavius became *more* particularly impressed by certain almost insensible mesmeric influences, conveyed from the soft, lily-white hand (although at the time encased in a blue kid glove) that gently leaned on his arm. At first Mr. Skeggs fancied that she was fatigued, and had in consequence leaned a little heavier on him, but in answer to his inquiries she said she was not at all tired; whereupon, on a repetition of the sensation, he felt at a loss what to do, and had very nearly squeezed the said hand with his own disengaged member, but instead looked into her face, when her cunning little eyes met his, just as they were

passing a street lamp, and caused such a thump in his breast that several vibrations ensued, that must have been perceptible to the little hand on his arm, even before it was simultaneously drawn close to his side, and which, from the pressure gradually increasing, might have interfered with its further freedom, but at that instant she became aware that the tie of her sandalled shoe was loose. Mr. Skeggs insisted on her permitting him to fasten it; but this was contested, and only finally compromised by his being allowed to tuck the ribbons into the dainty little shoe. It was the climax, however, and Octavius Skeggs arose from his stooping position, not to conquer, but a conquered man. A few silent moments ensued, and then a sigh, not of grief but of relief, for he was sufficiently himself again to tender his arm, but not so far recovered as to notice that he had turned the wrong turning. No matter; for, as they were nearing Miss Figgins' home, a little delay was of little consequence, or rather, for that reason, in Mr. Skeggs' estimation, it was just then of great consequence. The street was deserted, and but dimly lighted by the oil-lamp farther on. Mr. Skeggs slackened his pace,—looked behind and before; a crisis was approaching; a few yards farther and they would reach the end of the street. A clearing of the throat was succeeded by one or two ineffectual attempts to say something, always cut short by the young lady asking if he spoke; until, urged by the decreasing distance, and not without an increased palpitation, he somehow managed to suggest, 'What a nice little wife Arabella would make for somebody,' and which made her say 'Get out!' and laugh; a proceeding that was injudicious, for Mr. Skeggs laughed too, but went a little further than Miss Figgins, for during its continuance he (unconsciously of course) went through a most vigorous squeezing of the little hand resting on his arm, until he did become conscious, or imagined it, of a slight pressure in return, and without waiting to assure himself thereof, with a sigh, in professional parlance gave a rejoinder, timidly followed up by a sur-rejoinder and a *gentle* sigh, quite a gentle one, seeing that it did not proceed this time from the same source, but was rather an echo. Mr. Skeggs smiled, then laughed, as did Miss Figgins, who in addition blushed; then the former looked solemn, suddenly impressed with the conviction that things had assumed too serious an aspect to be accounted a joke; and as by this time they had turned the street and were at the door of the variety shop, he became further impressed that it was 'now.

or never.' So, taking Miss Figgins' hand again, the same hand, but from which the glove had been thoughtlessly withdrawn, he squeezed it, pressed it to his lips, and fondly whispered, 'Mine for ever,' and kissed it twice. But though the lady blushed again, a shade of disappointment seemed to pass over her face; unprepared for so much humility, she had naturally, or foolishly, anticipated her lover would have aspired to something higher. But the error was speedily repaired, for after he had knocked and said good-bye, he immediately returned with her glove, which he had crushed together in his hand during these blissful moments, and then, unable to resist the tempting pout of those cherry lips, he did it, and repeated it, and dwelt on it, until within an ace of overdoing it, as the door was half-open before it was completed.

Under the above circumstances, it is claimed that Mr. Skeggs may be pardoned any extra ebullition displayed on the references to the previous night made by the young clerk and Mr. Figgins; at the same time he is to be commiserated on thus early experiencing a drawback thereto, both as to its effect on him professionally and personally, he being now more particularly interested in the success of Mr. Figgins' suit.

As stated, on the retirement of Mr. Figgins, his playful remarks had restored Skeggs to his blissful reverie, only temporarily disturbed by the passage through his office of Messieurs Scarr and Lejette on their exit from the attorney's room; and it might have continued some time longer, as he paced up and down the office, imagining all sorts of unimaginable little adventures that were to take place in connection with the aforesaid young lady and himself during the next few days, had not his eye fallen on the little baleful ingredient in his morning's blissful cup. 'By jingo, I never thought of that! Now for a row!' said Mr. Skeggs, as he stopped short in his perambulation, and took up the summons, that had fallen down by the side of his desk, and reperused it. 'Won't he screech! Well, 'tain't my fault; blest if it is! Who'd ever take that for an n?' and then he laid down the summons and spelt through 'he draft again, to make sure, until he came to the objectionable word, 'N-o-r, yes, that spells nor—that's plain enough. What an unfortunate cause! wrong at every step; the old scratch is in it, I think.' Thereupon he attempted an imitation of his friend Grumphy, and flapped his wings by way of stirring up his failing courage, and was about to resume his walk when he heard his

name shouted out from the next room. Turning sharp round, he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Coming, sir.' Slightly startled at his temerity, he stepped over to his desk, re-read the line containing the fatal word, took up the documents and walked over to the door, at which he hesitated, and was about to peruse the draft once more, when the repetition of the call caused him to desist. Turning the handle, he entered with a scowl, intended to awe Mr. Hawkes, but which immediately disappeared on meeting the sinister gaze of that gentleman, whose temper, ruffled by the morning's disappointment, exhibited itself in his irritable manner.

'Mr. Zenas in your office?'

'No, sir.'

'Been here this morning?'

'No, sir.'

'Then why hasn't he?'

Assuming that he was himself better conversant with the reason, Mr. Skeggs did not reply, whereupon the question was repeated, when the clerk intimated that he did not know.

'Have they filed the plea in Jenks and Storey?'

Mr. Skeggs again replied that he did not know.

'Then why don't you?—you know nothing.'

Mr. Skeggs thought he did, though he did not say so. He knew something had gone wrong, and that a storm was brewing that only required a slight impetus to cause it to burst.

Whilst he stood at the attorney's side, watching his completion of a letter that was intended to be copied, he had time to ruminate on the effect of the communication he was about to make.

'There'll be the old boy to pay directly,' thought Skeggs, and unintentionally relieved himself by a sigh, which occasioned the attorney to look up, and testily request him not to breathe over him, whereupon he stepped farther off.

'Well, here goes! in for a penny, in for a pound;' and, screwing up his courage, he stepped forward with the intention of making the unpleasant communication, when he was prevented by the attorney remarking, as he continued his writing:

'Those rascally attorneys, Nettle and Barrem, have advised their client Jenkins not to complete the purchase of the brewery.'

'You don't say so!' responded Skeggs, encouraged by the condescension of the attorney.

'But I do say so,' said the attorney, as he signed his name to

the letter, and looked up at his clerk, 'don't I? Why do you contradict?'

Mr. Skeggs looked at the papers in his hand.

'What's that you have there? Don't bother me with anything now; take it away, I've enough to do. If you can't make out the words, ask Mr. Zenas when he comes. Copy this letter, and send it to Nettle and Barrem. We're not going to be played with by them, D.V.,' and he looked up at the ceiling.

'It's—it's—' stammered Skeggs, pressing the summons on Mr. Hawkes' attention.

'It's what?' said the angry man, snatching it out of his clerk's hand. 'What?—good gracious! there—there's a mess!' and he threw himself back in his chair, and contemplated the opposite wall, whilst he played a tattoo with his foot, at the conclusion whereof he sighed heavily, then closed his eyes, clasped his hands, and muttered to himself, 'Persecuted—afflicted—trial upon trial.' He paused, then repeated in a louder tone, 'It's enough to make a saint'— He did not finish the sentence, the allusion to the party named acting somewhat beneficially on his aggrieved mind. Sighing again, he once more read the summons, at the conclusion whereof he looked up most benignantly into his clerk's face, and said abstractedly, 'Poor Figgins!—poor old man! your cause lost through carelessness.'

'O no, sir!' exclaimed Mr. Skeggs, roused by this unexpected sympathy with one in whom he felt an unaffected interest. 'It's not so bad as all that.'

Mr. Hawkes recovered from his abstraction, and regarded his clerk with a severe look, that indicated a return of the storm.

'What the dickens do you mean, sir?'

'Why, we'll take out a summons at once to—to begin'— The agitated state of Mr. Skeggs' mind prevented his recalling the exact words used by his ingenious young friend, and the impatience of his employer adding to the confusion, as he begged him to leave off stammering, he rattled out at a venture, 'A—no go!—a—no go!'

'Mr. Skeggs,' exclaimed the attorney, his temper again on the ascendant, 'none of your slang here. How dare you use such language in my presence?'

'I beg pardon, sir, I didn't mean that—that ain't it; I mean a summons to—hang it, it's gone again.' The lawyer frowned, but as Skeggs had his eyes closed, and was rubbing the word up on

his forehead, he did not observe it. 'A summons to—well, it means to do it over again.'

'*De novo* ?'

'Yes, that's it,' said Mr. Skeggs with a bland smile, but which immediately faded off as the lawyer exclaimed,

'To the mischief with your *de novo* ! How came you to make such a mistake ? 'Pon my word, it's too bad. Would any one else but me put up with it ? Is my patience, my forbearance, my Christian charity to be tried to the utmost ? Heigho ! Of what use is it that I draw out every document myself in such plain, legible characters, if this is to continually occur ? Everlastingly making some mistake—everything that's given you to do done wrong ; so exceedingly plain, too, as that word was written.' Mr. Hawkes was waxing warmer as he proceeded towards the climax, and so was Mr. Skeggs, until, having risen considerably above the temperate, he reached the boiling-point, and in a nervous, excited manner and tone, that put a sudden stop to the lawyer's harangue, even causing him to dodge, he thrust the draft on his desk before him, and leaning his head down thereto, held his finger on the blurred letters that were the occasion of all this trouble, and then demanded of him 'If that was plain ?'

'Take away your hand,' said the astonished lawyer, who was not prepared for such an exhibition of temper on the part of his brow-beaten clerk. 'Where is it ?'

'There, sir.'

'Where ?' said the attorney, bending his head and reading a few words in advance, two or three times, but always stopping short at the fatal word, over which he stumbled each time. 'Deary me, and you call that not plain ! But your own sense might have told you, even if it was not plain, that it was meant for nor. Could you not see that it should be nor ?' Mr. Skeggs would have attempted to vindicate himself, but anticipating his intention the attorney continued, 'Oh, you are right, and I am wrong, of course. You're always right—never wrong—never wrong ;' and the immaculate lawyer leaned back again in his chair, and gazing at the ceiling, reviewed the state of affairs, until, receiving an oracular inspiration, he said, 'Mr. Skeggs, go at once and take out a summons, returnable to-morrow, to shew cause why'—

'We should not commence *de novo*,' interrupted Mr. Skeggs, elated that he had brought the lawyer over to his view, and anticipated him for once in legal lore.

'Bless me, Mr. Skeggs, will you allow me to speak? You'd better take my place,' and he made as though he was about to exchange positions, which rather disconcerted the clerk; then, continuing his directions, he added, as he wrote it down on a piece of paper, and handed it to Skeggs, "'Figgins v. Bodkins—Summons for leave to amend plaintiff's rejoinder on the merits;" and that will save costs.'

'Wonderful 'cute man,' said Skeggs to himself, as he left the room to execute his commission, and well pleased at getting off so easily. 'I'd never 'a' thought of that,'—and then a suspicion crossed his mind that his friend the lawyer's clerk was 'cute too, and had been trying to put him on the wrong scent. Notwithstanding, for some reason or other, the judge at chambers, on hearing the arguments on both sides, decided in favour of Jack's suggestion, and the cause was commenced *de novo*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DISCLOSURES IN A PIG PEN.

CUFFED, kicked and bruised, in earnest and in fun, the physical education of Willie Wilton, in common with all who had preceded him, was rapidly progressing, although, unhappily for his own comfort, not with the same result. Had he resembled the ordinary material, subjected as he was to the same peculiar treatment, he might early, and with less cost to himself, have resolved into the coarse, rude transformations of the majority of his schoolmates, and thereby have avoided much of the harsher usage that the retention of his natural guilelessness of character provoked. But this, owing to his early moral training, founded on a native temperament sensitively capable of lasting holy impressions, no amount of corporeal suffering could effect.

As a rule, Yorkshire schoolboys were marvels of endurance. Unaffected by black eyes, bloody noses, limping legs, broken fingers, and the like, indigenous to the place, they were not long in becoming equally inured to the scholastic *régime* of desk-stalking, birch-flogging on the nude person, poisoning themselves on one leg, or caning on hands, backs, or heads, the scars therefrom in some cases bearing life-long testimony to the perfection of the discipline to which they had been subjected. These, coupled with the dietary and domestic economy already described, were powerful auxiliaries towards repressing the human and developing the animal; all tending to a rapid approximation of the subjects of such discipline to the aboriginals who, clothed in skins, in earlier days roamed the moors and forests of the locality, a condition ordinarily attained by the boy fortunate enough to be submitted to its action sufficiently long to complete his education.

But then it must be admitted there were occasional failures,

where the subject experimented on was, through constitutional weakness or resulting infirmity, unable to bear up under the process, and of course 'went to the wall,' or more correctly to the ground, or under it; but that was unfortunate for the boy, or the master. If, however, under such treatment he survived, he was undoubtedly entitled to consider himself, in the vernacular of the country, a 'wick one.'

But whilst Willie's earlier training, rendered thus powerful by grace, was exerting a conservative influence that shielded him in a measure from the influence of the grosser manifestations of evil, it could not render him impervious to the deleterious influence the treatment he was called to undergo had upon his frame. Physically he was weak,—the *treasure* was in an earthen vessel, and the strain on that fragile body could not be long continued without proving too great. His bruised heart and wounded spirit shrank from companionship so uncongenial; and his retiring nature, causing him to isolate himself from all friendships but of one or two, in some measure insured him a greater immunity from oppression than otherwise he could have withstood; but he could not so easily close the entrance to the silent and insidious worm that was undermining the fabric, and hastening to sap the citadel within. With a growing and mysterious feeling of pleasure, he continued to resort to his little woodland sanctuary, and there pouring out his plaint, asked and obtained that comfort and solace which is never withheld from the weakest, tiniest follower of Him who, tempted and tried in all points as we, knows how to succour them that are tried, and without which he would soon have sunk into despondency.

Returning one afternoon from his retreat, to which, after the dismissal from school, he had retired, as he climbed over the plantation wall, Willie espied Frendzburgh strolling through the rookery. Hesitating whether it would be agreeable to the latter to join him, he stood watching, until, caught sight of by his friend, he called him over, and hastening to his side they sauntered towards a small building in the right-hand corner of the grounds, under which was an arched gateway entering into the plantation, occasionally utilized as a pig pen, but at present not occupied. As they entered the arch, observing some clean straw in one corner, they seated themselves thereon.

The attachment, if we may venture to employ such a term in relation to those amongst whom the stern exhibitions of selfish-

ness were so constantly displayed, conceived by Trelawney towards his young friend, suffered no diminution on his further and better acquaintance with his truthful and ingenuous character; on the contrary, it became more confirmed, and yielding to the influence thereby exerted over him, he was oftener found in his society than with any of his own age or standing in the school; a proceeding, however, owing to the disparity in size and age, that did not fail to extort some disparaging criticisms from the bigger boys, who affected to despise such weakness. On the part of Willie, an affection for his protector was strongly manifested, as could not be otherwise in one of so impassioned a temperament, and he clung to him with a fervency that would have gained on one of sterner mould than Trelawney, and on whom, in all probability, it operated the more speedily from its being the first and only object that had so guilelessly appealed to his inborn consciousness of right, calling forth reciprocal feelings hitherto dormant, because hitherto they had not been evoked by a cause sufficiently strong to call forth their expression. The necessities of his situation compelled the concentration of his powers on himself, for the assertion of his rights. On his first introduction to the school he had undergone as severe an ordeal as any, without one to champion his cause, but though not less sensitive to hardship and wrong than Willie, he had been endowed by nature with a stronger frame and constitution, and, naturally brave and daring, had by force of character won his way to authority earlier than many of his fellow-scholars who had entered the lists before him. His self-reliance had rendered it unnecessary to resort to modes that the more timid novitiates adopted, and which eventually confirmed them as knaves and bullies. These favourable conditions, added to a generous disposition, had doubtless their effect in preserving him from the hardening tendency of the life to which he was subjected, and, as one result, often occasioned his interference on behalf of those whom some overt act of tyranny was more than usually oppressing.

Frendzburgh, stretched on the straw with his cap over his face, had lain some minutes without speaking, thoughtfully watched by his young friend, except when his attention was occasionally attracted by the entrance of a pigeon from the dovecot above, whose graceful bowings, as it ran along and picked up the seedlings on its road, were quickly terminated as it discovered

the presence of the boys, and thereupon, flapping its wings, rose and flew off. At length, wearied, or curious to know whether his protector was asleep, Willie bent over and softly raised his cap. The movement caused Frendzburgh to start up to a sitting posture, and taking the cap with a smile from Willie's hand, he shook it out and replaced it on his head, then turned round on his side, and leaned his head on his hand, looking towards the entrance; whereupon Willie playfully tickled his ear with a straw, and rolled out of his reach, as he tried to catch hold of him to pay him out.

'Wilton, don't you wish you were home?' The question, put so abruptly, caused the boy's countenance to assume an expression so in contrast with that worn the moment previous, that, apprehending the pain he had occasioned, he did not wait a response, but with the same view of following up what had been the direction of his meditations whilst lying silent, he turned the attention to himself by adding, 'How long do you think I've been at this place?'

'Oh,' said Willie, trying to overcome the rising emotion, 'how long?—let me see,' and biting off the ends of a straw as he considered for a moment, he continued in a half-questioning tone, 'Six months?'

'Six months! Why, wasn't I here when you came? Why, I came here when I wasn't much, if any bigger than you.'

'O my! did you? How you must have grown!'

'Yes; well, now, guess again. How long do you think?'

Willie pulled the straws out one after the other, and then, closing his eyes and opening them at each enumeration, he ejaculated, 'Six—seven—eight—ten—two sixes—two sixes?' He looked doubtfully at the other.

'What, twelve months?'

The other nodded. 'Yes, I should think so. Why, man alive, I've been here over seven.'

'Months?'

'No, years.'

'O my! seven months—I mean years;' and he twisted the straws as though endeavouring to extract an idea therefrom of the extent of such a period. 'Why, that's nearly as old as me. Shall I be as long?'

'How can I tell that? What part of London do you come from?'

'What part?—let me see,'—closing his eyes and then opening them,—'Oh, the old bird-shop part.'

'Bird-shop part,' responded Friendzburgh, laughing, 'where's that? Is that what they call the place? I mean what's the name of the street or square that you lived in?'

'The street or square,' said Willie musingly. 'The bird-shop ain't a street,' and he laughed.

'Well, of course I know that, but I mean what's the name of the street you lived in?'

'I don't know, but it wasn't a street, I know that.'

'Well, was it a square, or an alley, or a place, or a'—

'It was a lane—a lane—a lane!'

'A lane, and you don't know its name. What place was it near?'

'A church. Oh, you should hear the bells on Monday night. O my!

'Do they ring loud?'

'Oh, so beautiful! and when I and Mary used to listen to them out of the window, she said they went this way,' and in a sing-song tone he recited the old rhyme:—

' You owe me five farthings,
Say the bells at St. Martin's;
When will you pay me'—

Suddenly breaking off, he exclaimed, 'That's the name! I remember now; St. Martin's—St Martin's Lane, that's it.'

'St. Martin's Lane, and that's where you lived?'

'Yes, along with Aunt and Mary.'

'Mary, who was Mary? your sister?'

'No, I don't think she was, cos she lived upstairs, and had a brother of her own, named Eddy; but she liked me too, I know, and so did I.'

'Oh, Willie, loved the girls—loved Mary!'

'Well, that was no harm, for Auntie used to tell me I ought to love her, she was so kind and good.'

'And who was Auntie?'

'Who was Auntie? why, wasn't she my moth'— He hesitated, as the innuendo looks and winks that had passed between the schoolmaster and mistress occurred to him, as also the suppressed titter of the two boys when he made a similar remark at the breakfast-table on the first morning.

'Didn't you live with your father and mother?'

The boy appeared posed, and commenced burrowing with his hands under the straw; but on the question being repeated,

looked up, and in a doubtful tone said, 'Was Mr. Grumpy my father?' whereat Frendzburgh laughed heartily; and, colouring up, Willie threw himself on him, and pushing him down, put his hand on his mouth, exclaiming, 'Well, you needn't to laugh now! What was he, then?'

'Oh, you gaby, Wilton, you're enough to make a cat laugh;' and sitting up, he held him off, as he said, 'Your name Wilton, and you want to know if Mr. Grumpy, as you call him, isn't your father!' and he went off into another laugh, during which the boy made repeated efforts to pull him down again.

'Well, now, I'd like to know what he is, then.'

'How would I know? Perhaps he's your granddaddie.'

'Granddaddie! you're a granddaddie,' said Willie, unable to restrain his laughter; and then, recovering himself, added, 'Well, I don't know what he is, but he likes me, I know that; and that's what we called him.'

'And what was your Aunt's name? Perhaps she was his wife.'

'Wife! that's foolish; now who's the gaby? Wasn't she Aunt Fanny?'

Frendzburgh looked puzzled. 'Did they both send you here?'

'They send me here!—no, of course they didn't; they'd never send me if I lived a hundred years—they'd never have let me come to this hateful place. Poor dear Aunt!—a slight tremor was perceptible in his voice as he tried to say, 'Oh, if you only knew'— He was unable to proceed, which the other perceiving, he exclaimed in a rallying tone, 'Nonsense, you must not think of those things, nor talk in that way down here. But I want just to know how you came here. Who *did* send you?'

'Who? Why, wasn't it that nasty, old bad'—then he stopped, —'but Aunty said I mustn't call names, but I can't help it. It was old Dr. Scarr.'

'Dr. Scarr!' exclaimed Frendzburgh, regarding Wilton with marked surprise. 'What do you know about Dr. Scarr?'

'Do you know him? Is he your father? Did he send you here too? and does he send all the boys here?'

'O no; but what's he like?'

'Didn't you ever see him? Oh!—Willie shivered as he spoke; —'he's so ugly, and cross, and ill-natured, and makes people do what he likes. He made Aunty send me here, and he made Mr. Grumpy take me down to the ship, though I don't think he had any call to do that unless he liked, do you?—and then he keeps

his eyes like this,' imitating the surgeon. 'Oh, he's a horrible old thing, for he made a lady cry about me.'

'Made a lady cry about you! What on earth are you talking about? Why would he do that?'

'I don't know, but I know he did it, for she loved me, and kissed and cuddled me, and cried about his sending me away.'

'Umph! I declare you're quite a lady-killer; all the girls and women seem to be in love with you. I shouldn't wonder if even Milly loses her heart; I must look out that you don't cut me out there. What would you say if I told you that I'm going to live with your old friend the doctor, one of these days.'

'Live with *him*! you! What would you do that for? He ain't your father, is he?'

'No, but I'm going to be a doctor, and my guardians say that I'm to learn under him.'

'Guardian,' repeated Willie, not comprehending the meaning of the term, 'guardian,—what's that? Is that *your* aunt?' but perceiving by Frendzburgh's look that he had made some fresh blunder, and that the other was about to have another laugh at his expense, he caught up an armful of straw, and throwing it on him, both fell back, mutually surrendering themselves to their risibilities.

'Oh, Willie, but you're a simpleton!' said Frendzburgh, on recovering himself. 'You'll know better by-and-by; you're just at the place to learn, and you've a good deal to learn yet, I tell you, good and bad.'

'No, I won't! I won't learn anything bad; I promised Aunt I wouldn't.'

Frendzburgh shook his head. 'Why, *you* haven't learnt any badness.' Trelawney shook his head again, as much as to say his young friend was still at fault.

Willie looked at him earnestly, then kneeling by his side and putting his face close to his, said gravely, 'You ain't bad, are you?'

'I'm not good, Wilton.'

The lad drew back slightly, and then said, 'Aint you? Don't you love Jesus?'

'Eh!' said his friend, startled at the mention of this unfamiliar name, and then added with some testiness, 'What's that to do with it?'

'Oh, a great deal! I do; I love Him, and so do you, don't you?'

'Never mind ; we won't talk about that, that's foolish.'

'Why? Didn't your—your mother teach you about Him?'

'Come, drop that! we don't know anything about those things here, and you'll have to give that up at once, or you'll soon have them all down on you. Why, you'll go by the name of the young hypocrite, or the Methodist parson, which is just the same, and they'll swear at you on purpose to plague you.'

'O dear, swear at me for that!' For awhile he tried to comprehend why they should swear at him on that account, but was interrupted by Frendzburgh drawing him closer to his side, and in a serious tone addressing him:

'Wilton, you're too good for this place. You've a great deal to learn, I see, much more than I had when I came here, but then I was older than you; but take my advice, make haste and pick up all you can, and try and get bold and brave; you're too girlish, you must get rougher and fiercer, if you can.'

'Must I? And would that make me like the rest of the boys?—like Bangs and Kappa?' Frendzburgh assented. 'Then I don't want to be bold nor fierce.'

'Then what'll you do when you've got to take your own part, and the younger chaps begin to crow over you?'

'Why, I'll come to you,' said the confiding lad, as he looked into his friend's face with a smile, and then took hold of his hand and played with it. The truthful manner in which the unsophisticated boy had conveyed his thoughts to his friend, and the perfect reliance placed in him, could but affect the elder boy, and caused an involuntary pressure of the hand, that implied Willie had not wrongly interpreted his heart.

Willie raised the hand to his cheek, and fondling it, said with some warmth, 'O no, you *ain't* bad; and yet you've been here so long,—and you're so good to me.'

Frendzburgh experienced something that he was unused to, and found it expedient to withdraw his hand to employ it in arranging his necktie; then, affecting a laugh, he remarked, 'But I meant, what would you do when I was gone, if you don't learn to take your own part?'

This allusion to a contingency that had never occurred to the boy produced a painful revulsion; the radiance vanished, and a paleness overspread his countenance.

Seeing the effect his remark had produced, Trelawney once more passed his arm around the lad, and said, 'But there's time enough to talk about that; I'm not going yet a bit.'

A sigh of relief escaped the boy, and leaning his head on the other's shoulder, he exclaimed, 'O no, not yet! I am so glad,—not yet; and then perhaps I'll go too.'

'How?' interposed Frendzburgh.

'Perhaps the doctor will send for us both, and if he don't, wouldn't you take me?'—he looked appealingly into the other's face;—'I can't stay when you're gone.'

'I'm not gone yet; it's some time before then, and you'll be getting a big chap by that time, thrashing us all. Won't you make us stir round! Look out for yourself then, Mister Trelawney,' he continued, thus rallying his young friend, until, carried off by his teasing, Willie had pulled him down on his back, and was astride his breast, threatening to pay him out at once.

During the latter part of this conversation, a shadow had, unseen by the two boys, fallen on the ground at the entrance of the archway on the plantation side, but on the cessation thereof had disappeared.

'I must be off, by Jove!' said Frendzburgh, jumping to his feet. 'I quite forgot I promised Mape I'd go with him to set some night-lines, and I want to get them ready before supper.'

'I'll go and get you some bait; I know a good place in the plantation to get them.'

'Do, there's a good chap. I'll be back this way, and you can have them ready.'

Quite proud that he had it in his power to do even this little service for his protector, he ran off into the plantation, and turning the corner sharply came butt against Aslem, who thereupon seized him by the collar, and demanded if he could not see where he was running to, at the same time threatening him in phraseology too coarse to repeat, and after giving him two or three cuffs, ordered him to the school-room to tell Bangs he wanted him, and to be quick about it.

As Willie, in complying with this order, would thus be prevented performing the service he had just undertaken, he was about to explain how matters stood, when the other, in a loud and angry voice, threatened, if he did not 'cut his stick double-quick, he'd thrash him.'

The loud tone in which this was uttered caught Frendzburgh's ear, as he left the archway on the other side. Recognising the voice, he turned to the wall that separated the playground from the plantation, and, looking over, exclaimed, 'Ulloa! that you, Aslem? What's a matter?'

'What's that to you? I'll let that young un know when I tell him to do a thing, he'll do it.' Going over to a bush, he broke off a twig, and commenced pulling off the small shoots, intending to use it by way of enforcing compliance with his orders.

'Stop that! What's a matter, Wilton?' addressing the latter with seeming sharpness.

Willie was about to explain, when Aslem interposed, and said, 'He's got to do what I tell him, right off, or he'll feel this.' By this time, having stripped the stick of the offshoots, he gave a cut with it in the air that caused Willie to flinch.

In another second, his two hands placed on the top of the wall, Trelawney had vaulted over, and was by his side, and addressing him, said, 'You know he can't do two things at once, Aslem.'

'He's doing nothing now, and if he isn't off in a jiffey I'll make him.'

'But there's where you're mistaken; he's doing something for me, and you know it's first come first served.'

'What's he doing?'

'Why, as you said just now, what's that to you?—that's my business; I don't want to know yours.' Then turning to Willie, he said, in the same assumed austere tone, 'Wilton, what are you standing there for? Go and do what I ordered.'

Startled at the unusual and authoritative tone and manner, the boy immediately went off, under the impression that he had in some way offended his friend, but who in reality was by this mode intending to shield him, by making it appear that he had no choice; and shouted after him, as he hurried away, 'Bring them to me where I told you, and if I'm not there wait till I come.'

Aslem's eyes followed the retreating boy as he disappeared down the bank, dubious whether he should not interfere further before giving in; then, turning to Friendzburgh, he exclaimed, 'I tell you what, you're doing that boy no good; he's too saucy by half, and he wouldn't be so if it warn't for you; an' there's more nor me as says so.'

'How's that? who says so?' said Friendzburgh, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

'Never mind; people ain't blind. When a big fellow takes a little un half his size, and palayers and slobbers over him, and then gets him into a quiet place,'—here he looked over at the archway,—'and lets him preach and fool him, it's just regular spoilin' him.'

'I don't understand you if you mean that for me, so just speak out plain, and no mincing,' said Frendzburgh, drawing closer to Aslem, who had gone over to the wall, and was leaning with his back thereon. 'And as to Wilton, I don't think that boy would sauce any one.'

'No, of course *you* don't; no one supposes you do, as long as he's all right with you; but others do, and others can see how the cat jumps, and what you're at.'

'Well, let others mind their own p's and q's! I'm here too long to want any teaching, and if any one's got anything to say, let him come to me; that's all I've got to say.'

So, turning on his heel, he was about returning to the playground through the arch, when the other replied, 'Well, may be some on us *will* come to you one of these days, and sooner than you look for, though you are such a mighty'—

The sentence remained unfinished, for Frendzburgh, before it was half uttered, had halted, and as the last words fell on his ear the colour mounted to his cheeks, and he strode back to his monitor. Withdrawing his hands from his pockets, he demanded, in a stern voice, what he said.

'Never mind,' muttered Aslem, attempting to pass him, but which he prevented by stepping before him, exclaiming, as he raised his clenched fist,

'But I do mind! I do mind! Don't call me names.' He was becoming warm.

'Oh, you're a great chap! I s'pose you're to do just as you like.'

'Don't interfere with me, and don't call me names,—that's all.'

'Oh, of course not, *Mr. Trelawney*;' whereupon he sauntered off, muttering to himself, 'I don't want to quarrel just *now*. But I'm not afeard. I'll make boys do as I like without asking your leave; I've been here longer than you.'

Thus separating, Frendzburgh entered the arch, and walked slowly towards the school, his temper somewhat ruffled; whilst the other pursued his course in the direction taken by Willie, not exactly with the intention of seeking him, although entertaining a latent hope that he might fall in with the lad, and find some excuse for venting his choler on him. He was of too dogged a disposition to be turned aside from any purpose he had once conceived, and it was now certain he bore a grudge against both the boy and his protector, and which would not be

settled until, by one means or another, it was satisfied, though with regard to the latter it was of old standing. Whether his immunity from punishment, and those severe ordeals through which all the boys, more or less, had to pass, arose in part from the same cause, was not certain, but of late it had dawned on some of the wiser lads, and was gaining ground with the rest, that there was a growing *attachment* between Aslem and the usher, who was known to have a like ill-feeling to Trelawney, and that he had even ingratiated himself with the junior master. But from whatever cause it arose, one thing was evident, that this unprecedented *affection* was not to the advantage of the school in general, as more than once they had been alarmed by the discovery of the parties concerned in some depredation on the cabbage-garden, or spoliation of the larder, which, unless they had been betrayed secretly, could not otherwise have been detected,—secretly, since the consequences that would have ensued from any open disclosure were too sure and too unendurable to have led any one to attempt it. On comparing notes, it further came to be noted that the delinquents were ordinarily those against whom Aslem had some special ill-will.

Frendzburgh had not been the last to entertain a suspicion of the nature referred to, and which, if possible, would have caused a still greater divergence. Avoiding each other, however, they rarely came in contact, except as they had done this afternoon, and at such times the increasingly harsh manifestations of his overbearing tyranny had more than once called forth angry recriminations between the two, the remonstrances and expostulations of Frendzburgh on behalf of the oppressed proving specially irritating to the arrogant senior, who could ill brook any interference. Aided and abetted by a few parasites of kindred nature, to whom, for the same reasons, Trelawney had become equally obnoxious, a design was in contemplation whereby they might be avenged and Frendzburgh subjugated. Single-handed, Aslem felt his chance was small, even assisted by the cowardly interference that his confederates might afford. Their course of action was therefore as yet undecided, but only awaited some fortuitous occurrence to indicate the mode. Such was the relationship in which these two elder boys stood to each other at this period, and which the collision that had just taken place tended to exasperate.

Proud of his success in having procured a large leaf full of worms, which he had carefully wound up and placed in his cap,

Willie climbed up the steep acclivity on his return to Frendzburgh, pushing his way through the underwood, and occasionally halting to unfasten the brambles that pierced his loose garments, and every now and then brought him to a stand. Unable to force his way through a thick clump of tangled bush, he was compelled to go on all fours, and creep through an opening close to the ground, from which as he emerged, after gathering up the worms that he had upset in the effort, on regaining his feet, he was riveted to the spot by finding himself almost face to face with what, had he been familiar with sylvan lore, might have been taken for one of the Dryads, especially as her matted tresses were at that moment interwoven with woodbine, and studded with knot-grass, dandelions, and the many-coloured milk-wort; but as Willie was not read up either in poetry or mythology, though already partially learned in Grumbleby traditions, in which very mythical essences formed a large component, he came at once and very naturally to the conclusion that it was a lump of humanity in petticoats, and the next glance informed him that the owner of the petticoats, with the wreathed head, was Miss Milly.

The young lady herself did not appear in the least surprised or abashed, as might have been expected, which suggests the idea that she rather anticipated the apparition to rise in that locality; possibly she had clandestinely informed herself of the young Grumbleby's movements, and awaited his return in that spot. However that may be, it could not do otherwise than occasion a small process of reasoning in Willie's mind, to account for the *rencontre* in that especial locality; and not possessed of the same amount of assurance as the sylph, he became very much engaged in searching the ground around lest a stray worm should have escaped his notice whilst regathering them; during which confused state of mind another migrated from his cap, and was about being followed by the rest, who were making a circuit within, stretching up their long pointed extremities to ascertain the possibilities, but were detected and frustrated. Replacing them all, and covering them with fresh leaves, he ventured to look up under his brows, and detected the girl's head, protruded downwards, endeavouring to catch a sight of his face, a broad grin overspreading her broad face. As she caught his eye she beckoned him to approach, which, after another survey of the contents of his cap, he did slowly, until, arrived within reach, she took him by the arm, and drawing him to the trunk of the

fallen tree on which she was seated, signed to him to be seated also. Depositing his bait between them, he was about to comply with her wish, when Milly's curiosity induced her to take up the cap and look therein. On removing the leaves, the sight of the vermicules caused her to utter a cry of disgust, and throw the cap from her; then picking it up, she knocked out the one or two still remaining, and brushing it with her apron, popped it on Willie's head, who, during the operation, had stood aghast. A glance at the boy's countenance told her she had made a mistake; in another instant she snatched the cap from his head, and falling on her knees, commenced a vigorous search for the bait,—that, threading through the weeds and under the broken sticks, were fast disappearing,—though wondering and unable to comprehend why he should have been so affected at the loss of such strange playthings. Recovered somewhat from his dismay, Willie hastened to her side to assist in their recapture, when together they succeeded in regaining about a third; but learning the purpose for which they were intended, Milly set to work with the broken blade of an old knife, with which she had been digging up her flowers, and was not long, in concert with Willie, in making up the original stock. Pleased at her success, and at the satisfied air of the boy, in her impulsiveness she had very nearly occasioned a fresh imbroglio, for, taking the cap off the ground, she was about to place it on his head, as the particular part of his person for which it was designed, when Willie, anticipating her intention, fortunately prevented it by seizing and closing it tight to preclude any further mishap. At this Milly laughed so heartily that, catching the infection, the boy joined her, and thereupon any remaining acerbity of temper occasioned by the girl's misconception disappeared.

As Milly resealed herself on the fallen trunk, Willie did the same, and forthwith she drew from her pocket something wrapped up in a piece of printed calico, which, after insisting at his guessing at the contents, but in which he was unsuccessful, she unrolled, and produced a large wedge-shaped piece of fruit pie, that she placed in his hand and then conducted to his mouth, watching the operation of each succeeding bite with evident delight and equal enjoyment, at the conclusion wiping his mouth with the piece of calico. Passing her stout arm around his waist, she drew him tightly to her side, and peered into his face with an animated expression, that drew a responsive

acknowledgment from the boy, who felt his heart drawn to the strange but kind creature.

'You're Willie?' said she abruptly, and then looked stedfastly into his face. Willie nodded. 'Willie what?' continued she in the same abrupt manner. Upon his affording the information, she repeated to herself, 'Wilton, Willie Wilton. Is that your real name?' The boy looked at her doubtfully, not quite comprehending the question. 'Tain't your nickname, is it?

'What's that?' It is probable that the surname sounded to her ear as a duplication of the first, for she went on repeating it until she had translated it to the same word, when she exclaimed, 'Get out with your Willie Willie! I know better,—tell me true.'

'No, I said Willie *Wilton*.'

'Wilton?' She repeated the word two or three times, until it assumed a distinct sound in her apprehension, when she again pressed him to her side.

Becoming more emboldened by the heartiness of her manner, he ventured to inquire what they called *her*,—not that he was unacquainted with the designation by which he was in the habit of hearing her spoken of by the boys, but, as she had just surmised in reference to his own case, this might be merely a name adopted by the school. She hesitated for a second or two, as though endeavouring to recall it, but not succeeding, replied, in a tone that implied her mistrust of its correctness, 'Well, they call me Milly.' Then assuming a softer look, she said, 'Do you love me, Willie?' and thereupon gave him an extra squeeze. He did not immediately answer, for he was pondering whether it was right to *love* any female except Aunt Fanny and Mary, and not quite certain that any other term would please, he replied, with more fervour than otherwise he would have done, but not more than he felt, 'I *like* you.'

'So do I,' said the girl; 'I love you, Willie, I love you!' this was uttered emphatically.

'Do you?' said the boy, 'what makes you?' A mournful expression passed over her face, and she looked vacantly into the dark shade of the wood in front, and then turned her eyes on his, and as they met, exclaimed, 'So like,—just those eyes,—so like!' Before she could proceed any further, a big round tear had mounted into her eye, and fell on to Willie's hand, but which she hurriedly wiped off with her gown.

'Who?' said Willie in a subdued t

iced her

emotion, 'who am I like?' As she squeezed back any other drops that might be inclined to follow the first, she held her hand to her forehead, and appeared buried in thought. Presently the cloud had passed, and she took the boy by the hand, and arranging his tossed hair with the other, after getting it into some order, she said,—

'Have you any little brother, Willie Willie?' She had blended the surname into the other again.

'No; but I've got a little'—he felt disposed to say sister, but recalling the late amusement of Frendzburgh at his representation of Mary to him, paused to consider, under the pretence of looking into his cap to ascertain if the worms were all right, then added, 'a little *kind* of a sister friend,'—at a loss to otherwise describe a relationship that he imagined *must* exist between Mary and himself.

'Have ye? What's her name?'

'Mary—Mary Jones.'

'And do you love her?'

'Don't I?' and he gave his head a shake in confirmation thereof.

'Any one else?' Milly pressed him to her side once more, and then looked into his face with an expression that almost suggested what the reply should be.

'Yes, that I do!' said the boy, returning her glance with a beam of delight at the opportunity of imparting to one who, from her sex and manifested interest in him, he felt sure would sympathize in the warmth of his affections, 'that I do!' and in the ardour of the rising emotion he squeezed the hand that held his. Milly was moved, and with difficulty refrained from kissing the boy's lips; but impatient to hear from them the confirmation of her raised hopes, she held his face towards hers, whilst she awaited the words that should impart to her soul a rapture hitherto almost unknown, and with a beaming countenance she exclaimed,—

'Who is it, Willie? Who do you love else?'

'Aunt! Oh, I love her so, she's so good.'

Milly relaxed her hold, and drew back; a pitiful look passed over her face, whilst a tremor through her frame testified to the severity of her disappointment. Wringing her hands, she exclaimed with bitterness, 'No! no! No one loves me!' and pulling the wild flowers out of her hair, she cast them from her, and without bestowing another look on Willie hurried from him,

and disappeared amongst the bushes on the Hall side of the plantation.

Astonished at this abrupt proceeding, the boy sat transfixed on the decayed trunk. That he had unintentionally grieved one who had evinced so unusual an interest in him was evident from her proceeding, and at the thought his heart became full. Perhaps it was not too late to atone ; an explanation might put all to rights ; so, sliding off the seat, he ran to the spot at which she had vanished, and, forcing his way through, came to a gap in the wall that ran between the wood and the back premises of the main building, but through the door of which he was only in time to catch sight of Milly as she entered. With a sorrowful heart he returned for his cap, and then, fearing he had lingered too long, hurried off to the archway, where he found Frendzburgh and Mape Harfagr awaiting him, who called out to him as he approached to make haste, or they would be too late ; and, in rather a petulant tone, the former demanded what had kept him so long, that there would hardly be time now to set their lines before supper. This reproof, though made with much less asperity than would have been the case with any of the other seniors, coming as it did on his already oppressed spirit, from his only other friend, had nearly proved too much for the boy, who there-upon experienced some difficulty in preventing himself giving way to his overcharged heart. Frendzburgh was not slow to observe the workings of his features, but, without appearing to do so, took the cap from his hand, and, as he looked therein, exclaimed, ' Oh, that's famous ! look, Mape. No wonder he was long ; there's enough there for both of us.' He emptied the contents into a small bag, and, tying the mouth thereof, gave it to Willie to carry as he placed the cap on his head ; and then, bidding them come along, the three descended the path to the river, occasionally halting to watch the movements of some finch or other bird, as it flew up, with a grub in its beak, into the surrounding trees, among the branches of which, hidden by the thick foliage, its nest was cosily built ; the search for nests formed a part of the amusement of the schoolboys, the voices of some of whom could be then heard, at various points in the interior, in pursuit thereof.

Quite restored by the cheery tone of Frendzburgh, Willie ran on before until they came to the water edge, along which they proceeded until they arrived at the spot selected for setting their lines, which they lost no time in doing, as the evening was fast

drawing in. During these proceedings, the little lad had been additionally gratified by the altered mode of address adopted by both Frendzburgh and his companion, by whom he was now invariably styled Willie, the usual academical mode of designating by the surname being dropped.

This change, at least with Frendzburgh (to the other boy it was a sufficient reason that his protector did so), was occasioned by what he had just learned of Willie's apocryphal connection with the surgeon, wherefrom, as also from the strange coincidence of his own equally unexplainable association with that same functionary, he conceived a fraternal relationship ought to exist between them, and as this would operate still further to the advantage of his young friend, he took care that some such, though not very definite, idea should be promulgated in the school, and thereby give colour to a claim to his protection.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE NEW-MADE SONG.

'STOP, boys!' exclaimed Frendzburgh, as the three scaled the wall and stood within the rookery; 'what's a matter? what's going on down there?'

'Aw'm blowed,' replied Harfagr, 'ev thur ain't owd puddin'-cheek an' his unkimmun prodigy a-gitten' down t' schooilroom; an' thurs all t' chaps a-followin', an' yon's Grip and his wizund Shaddy t'lois ahind wi' his mouth organ. Wha's up, aw wonner?'

The stream was setting in from all quarters of the playground, each boy in his turn taking up the 'all in' cry.

'Let's hurry,' said Frendzburgh, 'and see what's going on.'

The two set off at a run until they overtook one of the boys, of whom they demanded what the row was.

'Don't you know?' replied the lad. 'We're all called in to be put through.'

'Put through what?'

'Why, singing; we've got to do the singing at church to-morrow.'

'Tha be hinged, doan't t' Smith boys do t' singin'?' said Harfagr.

'Well, if you know better, why d'ye ax?'

The cause of this unusual commotion at the Academy arose in this wise. A very large component of the congregation of the village church was made up of the scholars of the scholastic institutions in the neighbourhood, to whom distinct portions of the sacred edifice were assigned, sufficiently remote from each other to prevent any untoward collision that would assuredly have taken place had they been within reach, a sort of hereditary feud existing between them; wherefore, as regards the boys (between whom a community of interest might have been supposed rather to have created an alliance than otherwise), was

not known, but certain it is that it was always manifested in the accidental *rencontres* in woods, fields, or by the river-side, and would not have been restrained even within the house of God, though it might have been more covertly exhibited.

The contests between the *heads* of these rival houses were confined to the periodical visits to the metropolis, at which seasons an exhilarating warfare was carried on through the press, the advertisements in the various journals overtopping each other in a marvellously ascending scale, wherein the salubrity, scenery, educational and domestic advantages, and other desiderata, were set forth in most elaborate terms. The shrubberies, the flowering parterres (no mention of the cabbage gardens), the shady groves, the limpid streams, the undulating landscapes and fairy-like dells, beggared description and bewildered the reader; whilst the classic teaching, the careful training, high living, genteel clothing, and gentlemanly companionships, rendered these centres of learning the most desirable and attractive in the kingdom. Each, however, seemed to ignore the existence of any other such elysium for the time being, especially in their locality, and thence arose a strong amount of hostility during its continuance, which was until they severally departed for their Eldorados in charge of a bevy of little unfortunates, when the bellicose spirit terminated, and they fraternised for the next six months.

As doing the singing was considered to imply an undoubted pre-eminence, and conferred a distinction on the school selected as the church choir, it, of course, became a much-coveted post. But, from whatever cause it arose, whether from a non-appreciation of the talent for a season developed, from a love of change, or that the worthy incumbent and churchwardens, desirous of acting impartially, resolved to afford each school an opportunity of displaying their proficiency, and thus, by the variety of musical talent, to delight and astonish the congregation, certain it is, it was not unusual, when the parish clerk had given out a hymn to be 'sung to the praise and glory,' on the congregation rising, in full expectancy of the repetition of last Sunday's tune by last Sunday's choir, whom they accordingly faced, to find themselves unexpectedly taken in the rear by a new choir, thereby occasioning no small degree of perplexity. Some of the more staid old worshippers would, for a brief space, be in doubt whence the strains arose; slow to believe, with the less godly, that they really could be earthly, not to be wondered at considering the

nature of the sounds, for, although not very heavenly, it must be confessed they were often unearthly enough. Too devout, however, to face round again, as the more irreverent had done at the first blast, the strange scene presented itself of a portion of the congregation standing *dos-à-dos* or *vis-à-vis*.

Information had during the previous day been received at the Hall that it had been decided that the singing portion of the church service was henceforth to be undertaken by the Grumbletonians, the congregation having very ungraciously signified that they had had quite enough of the Smithsonian 'yelling.' Owing, however, to the absence at Barnard Castle of the senior Mr. Kearas, who had only just returned, preparations had been deferred until his arrival.

The notice was short,—to-morrow was Sunday,—still not a member of the establishment, from Mr. Kearas down to the smallest boy, not to omit Tommy Kaily, entertained a question as to their ability for the exalted position.

But as it had come upon them so unexpectedly, the excitement was for a time irrepressible, and was shared in by masters and ushers alike. At length, after more than one ineffectual attempt, order was partially obtained, when a selection was made from the motley crowd of the leaders of the choir *par excellence*, who were arranged into tenors, sopranos, altos, etc., around the usher's desk, on the platform of which the musicians took their stand, the rest of the school being instructed to join in according to their several ability.

The instrumentals were Mr. Kearas senior, trombone; Mr. Kearas junior, bassoon; Mr. Shadd, clarionet; Tommy Kaily, bass-viol with three strings; first scholar, mouth organ; second scholar, triangle. As the only instrument with which Mr. Grippem was conversant was the cane, he was deputed to beat time on any unruly boy therewith.

All being pronounced in readiness, Mr. Kearas raised his benignant eyes from the sheet of music before him, and looked slowly around the room, ever and anon compressing his lips and shaking his ponderous head, implying thereby a profound sense of the great responsibility they were about to assume, then contracted his vision to contemplate the splendid band on the platform. All eyes were riveted on their leader. Mr. Kearas threw back the flaps of his coat, protruded his massive chest, and slowly raised the trombone to his lips; the attitude was grand, testified to by an involuntary movement throughout the room.

after which a breathless pause ensued. Presently a fearful, harsh, braying sound rose on the air. The first impulse was to turn towards the door and fly, the next to remain where they were, a succession of the first sound tending to the impression that Widow Cobbs' donkey (that they occasionally rode, half-a-dozen at a time, penny a ride) had thrust its head through one of the open windows to take a part in the performance. On went the terrible sound, blast upon blast, until, somewhat reassured, all eyes were turned upon the Grumbleby Orpheus, as he stood before them with distended cheeks and fiery countenance, head and eyes raised upward, his foot stamping at every sound that issued forth, oblivious to all else, even the fact that his dulcet notes had so entranced the orchestra, that from the outset every member thereof had remained spell-bound, whilst in the very act of following his lead.

Unconscious of the wonderful effect of his rare musical effort, and lost in a complete *abandon* to his captivating art, on went the schoolmaster, producing two singularly wild and weird-like notes, electrifying by their melody and sublimity even the females at the door, who had caught the enthusiasm, and hastened to witness the grand rehearsal. The musicians were aghast as they continued to watch their enraptured leader, and might have so continued, had not Mr. Grippem's services been called into request, some scientific beats of his rod becoming expedient to repress an indecorous imitation of the two aforesaid notes, which had become general throughout the school, and sounded very much, to his practised ears, like he-haw, he-haw. At length, exhausted by his unrivalled performance, and as deficient in wind as the trombone was redundant in water, Mr. Kearas sank breathless on to the usher's stool, the large drops rolling down his crimsoned face. A long-drawn breath of relief escaped the fascinated musicians at the conclusion of this unpremeditated solo, whilst the same two notes were again taken up by the boys, though in a subdued tone.

'Beautiful, isn't it, marm?' exclaimed Mary Ann at the door. 'What a surprising man Mr. Kearas is!'

'Ain't he?' replied the lady addressed; 'I never saw him beat at Tom Bones. I'm afeard Minas will never come up to his father. He hasn't the genius that man has.'

The domestic who stood by her side was about to ask why, then, he didn't let Mr. Minas have his genius, which she took to be the name of the instrument with which he had been discoursing

such sweet music, but at that moment all the instrumentals faced round to the school, and Mr. Kearas junior, taking the place of his exhausted parent, assumed the office of temporary leader. Twice was the bassoon blown into, but as it gave no other than a discordant response, he took off the mouth-piece, blew through and replaced it, and trying it again, produced a mournful sound.

'Now then for the symptoms,' exclaimed Mr. Kearas, addressing the other members of the orchestra; 'let's try that first,'—and, followed by the rest, he raised the bassoon to his lips. Forthwith there issued from that band sounds so unique, so distinct and variable, and so illustrative of the perfect control and management of their instruments that each performer had *independent* of the other, that the marvel was how so many dissimilar snatches, catches, or call them what you will, could all have been executed at one and the same time, without in the least disturbing any. Each seemed to be vying for the supremacy. At one time the mournful bassoon had it, then the shrill clarionet rose above the rest, but only in its turn to be drowned by the mouth organ, which organ was lost in the united desperate essays of the triangle and bass-viol, until, finally, the latter prevailed, under the masterly treatment of that veteran sportsman Tommy, who continued to saw away in a most delectable mode, every feature in his countenance and nerve and muscle in his body simultaneously moving in concert, in the frantic effort to maintain the ascendancy. Gradually the clarionet died off; then the mouth organ, chock-full of moisture, succumbed; next the cramped fingers let fall the triangle steel; and the contest was now between the three-stringed violin and the bassoon. The former triumphed, though, unconscious of the fact, Tommy continued vigorously at work, producing the same lugubrious triads. Entranced by his art, he might have continued some time longer, had not Mr. Kearas seized his fiddlestick, and held on to it until Tommy was brought to an understanding that his solo had not been encored.

As a matter of course, a very congratulatory conversation ensued amongst the instrumentals, each of whom, delighted at his own share in the performance, predicted a still greater success in what was to follow; and thereupon a consultation as to their next step took place, after which the bassoon was regulated with the bass-viol, whilst an effort was made to raise the clarionet to the same pitch as the mouth organ; the triangle was pronounced in tune, it always giving forth the same note.

A rearrangement of the choir also became necessary, as during the execution of the 'symphony' they had got mixed up. All was now reported to the senior Kearas as ready. Ever since his masterly performance of the overture, that gentleman had been seated on the stool, mopping up the perspiration that bathed his face, neck, and head, and gasping to regain a supply of oxygen adequate to the demand of his overtaxed lungs. Partially recovered from the effects, he rose, and coming forward to the edge of the platform, after Mr. Grippem had duly commanded silence, proceeded to inform the boys that he had been delighted beyond expression at the marvellous performance to which they had been treated, and that he had no doubt he should be equally so with the part now about to be taken by the school. The psalm, he went on to say, that had been selected, was one with which they were all familiar,—'Sing to the Lord a new-made song.' As it was usually sung every Sunday, except when alternated by 'O all ye people, clap your hands,' he intimated it must by this time be so well known to all as to preclude the necessity of books,—very fortunate, as there were none. 'And now, lads,' exclaimed he, with a flourish of his arm, 'Grumbleby Hall expects every man and boy to do his duty!'—a proceeding that drew from Mrs. Kearas and the ladies at the further end a renewed expression of astonishment at the wonderful talent displayed by the senior.

Thereupon Mr. Kearas turned round to the orchestra, and demanded if they were ready, upon which every instrument assumed its proper position.

'Give me your cane,' said Mr. Kearas to the usher; and with that he went through some original cuts in the air that he informed them were called beats, which had the effect of causing the members of the choir standing immediately in front of him to step back a few paces. 'Now then,—"Sing to the Lord a new-made song!"' exclaimed the conductor in a grave tone, as he struck the desk thrice with his baton, then raised and flourished it around his head, after which he projected it horizontally, and, closing his eyes, gave a heavy stamp on the platform, and exclaimed 'Off!' Every eye gazed intently on the schoolmaster. There he stood, in a superlatively histrionic attitude, the admiration of all, not excepting the ladies, who were nearly going off into ecstasies, as a sense of the sublime and beautiful was aroused within them. Never had Mr. Kearas been deemed capable of executing anything so graceful.

'Did you ever!' exclaimed all the female portion in a breath.

The pause was followed by a titter from the boys. Mr. Kearas opened his eyes and looked perplexed, as he evidently was.

'What—what the d—,' his glance at that moment opportunely falling on the other end of the room, he held on to the word in time to change it into 'dickens is the matter with you all? Why don't you sing, you choir boys? What are *you* stopping for?' exclaimed he, turning round to the orchestra, who, in common with the rest, had relapsed into a state of wonderment. 'Didn't I make the beats and give the cue? Again! Now, when I hold out the cane, and say "Sing!" commence.'

Once more the instruments were placed in position, once more Mr. Kearas flourished his baton, closed his eyes, thrust out his stick, stamped his foot, and shouted 'Sing!'

The clarionet, startled at the cry, shrieked out 'Sing!' and stopped; the mouth organ, correspondingly moved, did the same; the triangle steel shook so that it struck and fell to the ground; whilst the bassoon and viol jerked out such a discordant sound that the boys involuntarily screamed 'Sing!' and all was quiet.

'What in the name of fortune are you stopping at? Why didn't you go on, Mr. Shadda? Why don't you go on, Minas? What's a matter with you all?'

Mr. Kearas paused for an explanation; but as no one in particular appeared prepared to give one, after delivering himself of his sentiments in regard to their tomfoolery, as he termed it, and giving more precise directions to musicians and scholars, he took his stand in the same place, and went through the same preparatory movements, when, on arriving at the horizontal thrust and the foot stamp, such a crash, instrumental and vocal, ensued, as had almost upset even his equilibrium, and caused the female auditory to catch each other by the arms; but recovering himself with admirable presence of mind, and putting himself on a firmer basis, the cane was instantly in motion, gyrating high and low, up and down, right and left, accompanied by the school and orchestra, each vying with the other in desperate attempts to produce the greatest sound, and in an exciting race to keep up with the increasing speed of Mr. Kearas' baton.

Which of the instruments this time bore off the palm, it was impossible to decide, for the boys, who only knew the first line of the psalm, had arrived at such a pitch of enthusiasm that nothing could be distinguished beyond their mingled shouts of 'A new-made song, a new-made song, a new-made song!' which

they continued to repeat *ad libitum*, and with the additional grace notes ; some with their fingers in their ears, others pumping the beautiful cadence in and out thereof with the palms of their hands ; whilst others again were hammering an accompaniment on desks and forms with the wildest gestures, ever vociferating, 'A new-made song, a new-made song !'

And a new-made song it was,—so new in its harmony, metre, time, and mode of execution, that, accustomed as they were to the varied renderings thereof by the members of the rival choirs, there could be no fear of either parson, churchwardens, congregation, or even the said choirs themselves, ever recognising it as the old psalm of Sternhold and Hopkins, or of charging them with plagiarism. The *tune* itself was entirely original, and thenceforth entitled to be inserted in any new edition of the psalter under the distinctive title of 'Grumbleby.'

When Mr. Kearas came to the conclusion that they had continued sufficiently long to be supposed to have arrived at the end of the first verse,—a conclusion he was justified in coming to, as, by a very moderate calculation, at least three could have been managed within the same time,—he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Stop !' but under the impression that he was urging them on, on they went, with increased velocity and fervour ; Mr. Kearas meanwhile gesticulating frantically, in the vain hope of arresting them, until finally, in utter despair, he threw himself on Tommy Kaily. As this person had, as on the previous essay, become entirely enrapt in his own performance, he was, of course, quite unprepared for such a movement, the consequence whereof was that, losing his balance, he caught the schoolmaster by the leg, who, equally unprepared, lost *his* balance, and in another second the violoncello, breaking his fall, lay a ruin beneath his unwieldy body.

A scene of confusion ensued, during which the female portion of the auditory rushed forward to aid the rest of the orchestra in releasing Tommy from the superincumbent load that weighted him to the platform, by replacing Mr. Kearas in an upright position. An examination fortunately showed no abrasions, and nothing hurt save the unfortunate instrument, whose state the rueful countenance of the tailor musician testified how much he deplored, as, apart from its disabled condition, he was thereby deprived of the privilege of taking part in the forthcoming performance.

As soon as order could be restored, the practice was resumed ;

and after an attempt at the second psalm, which came off with equal success as the first, mutual congratulations ensued, and the declaration was made by Mr. Kearas that they were now ready to take their place as a choir in any church or cathedral, he did not care which, Durham or York; and adding his belief that they'd shame the king's choristers.

Dismissed to supper,—which had been deferred much beyond the usual hour,—and thence to bed, the effect of the evening exercise was apparent in the unneeded impetus which many a wild prank received from the exciting accompaniment of 'the new-made song,' which, even after all the tired lads had fallen asleep, might ever and anon be heard escaping the lips of some dreaming boy.

Hitherto this branch of study had been conducted in a strictly private mode; the two or three boys forming the class receiving their lessons in the back parlour, and which lessons were limited to the elementary exercises on the first few pages of the instruction book. Whatever drawback such a process might appear to offer to any great proficiency, it had the superlative advantage of rendering them very perfect in those exercises, so that at length they could perform them without the music, and, as in the present instance, adapt them as an accompaniment to every tune. Under such a close system, prior to this effort, it could hardly have occurred to the establishment that such an amount of musical talent, vocal or instrumental, was latent within the precincts of the Hall. Indeed it did not; for sooth to say, except an occasional ditty from some new boy, but whose dulcet notes soon gave place to other and less melodious strains, singing was quite out of consonance with the fitness of things that made up the earthly paradise within these bounds. Now, however, to the amazement, if not delight, of Jurdy Langstaff and other adults of the establishment, and Nanny Miller, Widow Cobbs, and the few neighbours in the immediate vicinity, a vocal musical element had been awoke within the recesses of Grumbleby, that long after refused to be *laid*, asserting its power down the lanes, over the fields, through the woods, and even ascending to the tops of the firs in the rookery, where it arrested the gregarious occupants in the midst of their cawings, and caused them to sidle their heads and cock their ears to catch the hitherto unusual strains, and wonder if some rival cousins were establishing themselves below.

Although allowed on Sunday mornings to remain an hour

longer in bed, the morning succeeding the foregoing demonstration, unlike most others, found the boys awake long before the accustomed time, anticipating even chanticleer. From a bed in the corner of the further room rose, in suppressed tones, the refrain of the previous night. The next bed, startled at the sound, awoke, and, under the illusion that they were still 'at it' in the schoolroom, immediately vociferated in unison the well-conned words; then another and another opened ears, eyes and mouth, and in a trice, room after room was uniting in the exhilarating chant of the 'new-made song.' As the sounds fell on the ears of the drowsy domestics, Jurdy and Tommy rose from their beds, and opened their doors to ascertain the cause, and in scanty linen and under bare poles, approached the foot of the stairs to listen. Presently, one after the other, the female portion squeezed their heads, encased in caps of motley hue and shape, through the narrow aperture that they ventured to open, and listened also.

'There's music, Sally; hearken to the soond o' they voices,' said Mary Ann, in an audible whisper, as she thrust her head further out, past Milly's, to get a better sight of the visage, enveloped in the folds of a huge night-cap, projecting from the next door.

'Whisht!' said the maid-of-all-work; 'an' ye ca' 'at mewsic! Aw tel't ye aw've noa slept a wink the neet, hearkenin'; an' aw tel't tha moar, aw'd ha' geen a ear off ma yed ev aw'd no hearkened. Aw neer heered sich a mewsic i' me life;' and with that the indignant Sally slammed the door, and trailing back into her bed, endeavoured to turn a deaf ear to the despised strains by 'feltering' the clothes round her head.

'Shoo's a gaumless theng, an' it's a doleful seng shoo'd seng,' exclaimed Jurdy, of whose presence at the foot of the stairs the young ladies only became aware by this remark, and as a consequence quickly withdrew their heads within the room, whence from the 'oh my's!' and 'lawks!' and giggles that were heard through the slightly-closed door, it was apparent they had been rather oddly affected by the apparition.

At the same instant the door of the opposite room gradually opened, and after listening a minute for the Euterpean sounds, which had temporarily ceased, Mrs. Kearas, habited in her night-attire, stepped cautiously on to the landing, and had got half-way to the stairs before she too became aware of the presence of the two *sans culotte* artificers posted there. To turn round

and attempt a precipitate retreat was the work of a moment, but in doing this her foot became entangled in her night-gown, and tripping her up, she lay prostrate on the floor. Ignoring their own situation, the gallant men stepped forward with alacrity to proffer their aid in raising their worthy mistress; but no sooner did she become aware of their intention than, uttering a faint scream, she closed her eyes, scrambled off on all fours, and came butt against Mr. Kearas' legs, who, alarmed at the disturbance outside, and only thereby aroused to a consciousness of the absence of his spouse from his side, had managed, half awake, to tumble out of bed and reach the door as the shocked lady was re-entering. With some difficulty maintaining his equilibrium, and utterly confounded by the strange scene that presented itself, Mr. Kearas stood with open mouth and eyes, in mute bewilderment at the presence of the two men, and the extraordinary position of his wife; but, before he had time to recover or utter a syllable, Mrs. Kearas had contrived to raise herself by the door-post, and, pushing him inside the room, slammed the door, and the next moment was heard rating Mr. Kearas in a very loud key, but which was quickly drowned in the fresh burst that just then came rolling and swelling throughout the building, arresting the two men as they were entering their rooms, as well as once more attracting the attention of the inmates of the other dormitories, whose doors were again ajar to admit the unusual sounds of praise, so wonderfully executed, that even the stoical usher was moved, and constrained to admit to the junior Kearas (both of these gentlemen having been aroused) that he was quite affected thereby, and could scarcely restrain himself from ascending to the regions above,—though he did not intimate for what purpose,—whilst Mr. Shadd said he felt the same.

'All up! all up!' exclaimed Mr. Grippem in an unusually bland tone, as he passed through the bed-rooms, and on his return was followed to the store-room by the whole of the boys, carrying in their arms their week-day clothes, to be exchanged for their Sunday suits. As each was habited in nothing but his shirt, the majority of which (whilst the rest reached to undue lengths) were only apologies therefor, their very limited dimensions occasioned an irresistible temptation to the boy behind, who, yielding thereto, turned and fled, chased by the assailed, if detected, or failing which, a challenge ensued of 'Who did that?' accompanied by a grasp at the diminutive garment of the nearest

boy, but whose protest was cut short by some other party availing himself of the 'exposed situation ;' whilst, with equal celerity, the intending operator found *himself* called to his own defence against fresh attacks, following in rapid succession. But as this soon became epidemic, it required to be promptly met, as it invariably was by a counter-irritant in the person of Mr. Grippem, who, darting into the midst of the fray, always engaged therein with a heartiness that speedily stayed its further progress, at least in that direction.

A strange room that store-room—the one, as will be recalled, in which Willie and his two companions slept on their first arrival, and of which then only a partial survey was made. As remarked on that occasion, the shelves, which extended round three sides of the room, were piled with boxes, books, toys, and other articles, whilst sundry accumulations of boots and shoes and clothing lay scattered or in heaps on the floor. The boxes and trunks were those belonging to the boys on their arrival, and retained in this depositary until their owners should leave the school, if so happy a lot awaited them. The weekly recognitions of these usually elicited strong and even fond epithets, as well as occasional contention, more than one claimant asserting his ownership to a certain box, either because better than his own, or, where so many were alike, from mistaken identity. The clothing in one part of the room, ranged in an order known only to the teachers, was also that brought by the boys on their first appearance at the Hall, and since issued to them every Sunday morning, and returned, in exchange for their ordinary clothes, in the evening. It will easily be conceived that, though expedient that each boy should come into possession of his own, such an arrangement might eventually operate disadvantageously, since, in exceptional cases, the original owner might have developed into an entity of different proportions, if not in breadth, perhaps in height, in which case it would require some ingenuity to adapt to the altered condition. But as such would only be exceptional, it did not operate to any extent against the general success of the device ; for, from what has already appeared, where there was no increase of nourishment, there was not likely to be any very inconvenient augmentation of bulk or length ; and as no absolute necessity for such was recognised at these establishments, should it notwithstanding occur, so much the worse for the subject thereof, who, in the long run, after a few spasmodic but ineffectual attempts to maintain the progression

on the uniform allowance of food, usually and wisely gave it up, thenceforth much to his negative enjoyment, not only in the ability to sustain his acquired dimensions, but also to squeeze these dimensions into or through his original apparel. The great gain to such was very apparent from the isolated cases in which, despite the wholesome checks put upon any such attempt to change their identity, a boy did grow upwards, for in such cases (as before shown), by the artistic device of the surgeon tailor a piece of cloth of the nearest shade was very cleverly attached to the legs, unless (if the legs *only* persisted in growing) the body of the trousers could be lowered to afford the deficient length; thereby elongating the body at the expense of the leg, a mode to which the preference was given, and considered the best, as conserving the due proportions between both. Before passing from this glance at the contents of a room that possessed very peculiar attraction for the boys, it might be added that, in the opposite corner to the frowsy heap of clothing forming the cast-off livery of such as *did* leave the school, and from which selections were made for new boys, was a motley collection of toys, such as tops, musical boxes, miniature theatres, and a few articles of clothing, that never failed to elicit the admiration of the scholars; but were never disturbed or interfered with, save by moths and mice, time and tradition having thrown their *ægis* around them, the latter averring that they had belonged to owners of whom no record remained, either of their sojourn or disappearance.

The distribution of the Sunday apparel occupied but a short time, habit and an intuitive sense of adaptiveness rendering the usher quite expert in assigning to each his respective garments, including linen and hempen shirts, that were deposited there every Saturday night. The ablutions at the beck having subsequently taken place, terminated by the usual combings of their matted hair with their fingers, a special dress inspection ensued, —a rare occurrence, and only happening on an occasion like the present, when particular attention was likely to be attracted to their appearance. This part of the performance, however, taxed the ingenuity and patience of the ladies of the establishment, necessitating great contrivance, especially in the matter of linen, some of which, protruding through holes, or between trousers and vest, required a little manipulation on the part of Mrs. Kearas, in the first place in tucking it into the trousers, and in the next, in adjusting the surplus portion about the necks, so

that there might be no misconception as to which end of the garment was uppermost.

At the conclusion of this unusual proceeding, the whole adult establishment pronounced the toilet as the *beau ideal* in combination, and perfect in arrangement. Miss Milly, who had given extra attention to Willie, declared he looked beautiful, whilst Mary Ann reiterated the schoolmistress's assertion that they were all a credit to any institution, she didn't care which.

At the appointed hour the boys fell into line, and commenced their march to church, headed by Messrs. Kearas senior and junior, and other members of the band, conspicuously displaying their instruments, Mr. Grippem taking his accustomed place by the side of the procession. Mrs. Kearas and the household had preceded them, anxious to witness the sensation anticipated on their entrance into the building. Never had such a troop of ragamuffins been more suddenly metamorphosed into respectability, or stimulated into a sense of importance, and even an assertion of dignity. Hitherto, neither birch, cane, nor other salutary incentives, had been potent enough to incite them to order or regularity during these Sunday processions, as testified to by Mr. Grippem's appearance, who usually entered the church in any but a prepared state, consequent on the incessant threats, shakings, and blows, that were necessary to obtain the semblance of order; but this morning, to his surprise and relief, every boy walked as though conscious that the reputation of the Grumbleby Institution depended on himself, and which he appeared to have further secured by depositing it in his pockets, both hands holding on thereto with a will, lest it should get out again; a mode of perambulation, by the way, suggested by Mrs. Kearas, whose ready wit led her to combine the beautiful with the useful, the first by imparting a pleasing uniformity, the latter by putting a restraint upon otherwise very troublesome members. At times, however, this idea was productive of some inconvenience, as, on a boy's heel being trodden on by the young gentleman behind, his hands not being at liberty to grasp the boy by his side as a stay, he went headlong on to the one in front, equally unprepared from being in the same predicament, and it resulted that, before the impetus was arrested, several boys were extended on all fours, very similar to a game of ninepins; whereupon Mr. Grippem's undesirable interference was promptly afforded in setting them up again, thereby occasioning a very desperate effort to extricate the said hands from the pockets, and a firm deter-

mination not to return them thereto during the remainder of the procession.

'Is owt the matter, neebur?' said an old woman to Nanny Miller, as the Kearas boys marched through the crowd loitering about the church door, and, as anticipated, attracting unwonted attention by their swaggering manner.

'Owt the matter! that's plain to understand. Ay! it's nah the new noats'll be coomin',' replied Nanny.

'The new noats, bless us!' responded the old woman, her grey eyes kindling up.

'Aw doan't mean paand noats,' said Nanny.

'There's varry few o' them sterrin ;' 'deed, 'at 'ud be summat new, Wedda,' replied the other.

'Well, 'an aw'm shoor, aw'm noa so fond of ivvery thing new, neebur ; there's them owd psalm tunes, they're ivver'— chimed in another woman who had joined them, but was unable to conclude her sentence, the crowd, whose curiosity had been awakened by the boys' manner, having by this time borne them into the nave of the church.

Reverence for the sanctity of the place forbids a circumstantial relation of that morning's service. That it was of a very special and interesting character, and quite unique, may be inferred. For once the spirit of revivalism, hitherto utterly abhorred, had wakened up the drowsy pew-holders, for no one slept after the first hymn. The frigid, prim clerk was agitated, and, it was remarked, closed his eyes only once during the sermon, kept nervously awake by the unwonted fire of the good old parson, who himself was strongly moved. At other times precise and orthodox, studious to avoid disturbing the meditations of his saintly parishioners, he spoke 'in language soft as adoration breathes ;' and in measured cadence, so calm and placid, glided on from first to second, and thence to thirdly, that finally his ghostly counsel fell on dormant ears. But on this memorable day the energy and enunciation were truly edifying ; not an ear was dull nor an eyelid drooped ; and when, in the fervour of his aroused imagination, after an unprecedented flight, he swooped down on the scarlet cushion with clenched hand, a profound sensation was produced, greatly enhanced by the cloud of dust which, for a few seconds thereafter, hid the 'man of Ross' from mortal ken, the venerable cushion never before having been subject to such treatment, even from the sexton. But as this part of the performance nearly choked the reverend man, it was not again repeated.

Forbearing further description of that morning's service, the issue was that, tolerant as the minister and lay officials of the parish church had hitherto been of academical choirs, it reached its limit after this last unparalleled essay, and drew forth an utter repudiation of that style of music, vocal or instrumental, especially the latter. A question, however, might arise whether they thereby exhibited good taste, conflicting as it did with the sanction given thereto by the great Handel, who, it is said, on the occasion of a provincial concert, was applied to by an old violoncello player of the Tommy Kaily stamp, whose chief recommendation to the renowned composer was that he formed one of the church choir, but at the rehearsal, so enraged Diapason by his blunders that, running to the old gentleman, he shook his fist, and exclaimed, 'You blay in de church? Ver good; you may blay in de church, for we read de Lord is long long-suffering, of great kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,—you sal blay in de church, but you sal not blay for me!' and snatching up his manuscript, rushed out of the room.

The Pshawbys and members of the other academies considered themselves amply avenged, in this unceremonious invasion of their assumed rights, by the result; and hurried out of the edifice to enjoy the discomfiture of the Grumblebies, who, as they filed past, were greeted with euphonious imitations of 'the new-made song.'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

‘RIVING’—A DRAWN GAME.

STILL nursing his malicious intentions towards Trelawney, which had been intensifying since his last encounter, Aslem, in concert with his confederates, had awaited with impatience some fortuitous event that might present itself, whereby he could be so revenged as at the same time to ‘take the crow out of him,’ as he termed it. But as, in accomplishing this, he was desirous to increase his own *prestige* at the expense of Frendzburgh, he was compelled to proceed so warily that the opportunity might have been still distant, especially as the object of his hatred studiously avoided all contact with him, from personal dislike, had not a flagrant incident, in which Willie was again fated to be the prime cause, precipitated matters.

The afternoon previous to the day on which such rupture took place, Mrs. Kearas and her assistants had been engaged in the weekly occupation of baking. On such occasions, two boys were always employed to bring the brushwood, or ling, as it is designated, the growth of the moors, from the stack, and to heat the oven therewith; and on the withdrawal by the usher of the bread therefrom, their further duty consisted in carrying the loaves to the bread-room.

This was a much coveted employ, monopolized by a few of the bigger boys in turn, who, aside from such small pieces of dough that, during the heating process, they managed to ‘crib’ and bake at the mouth of the oven, enjoyed the higher privilege of ‘riving,’—the technical term for tearing off large hunks or crusts from the loaves whilst conveying them to the bread-room. We have called it a privilege,—it was, however, an unconceded one, of which the authorities were assumed to be in complete ignorance. It did occasionally occur to Mrs. Kearas, as the loaves subsequently came down for use, that they had an odd look about

them, but as want of room caused them to be crowded together in the oven, it was presumed that the large deficiency in one was occasioned by the missing portion having been pulled out of it by adhering to its neighbour loaf when separated, in which case it was of no moment, as, if it diminished the one, it added to the other, and no loss ensued. Besides, it was an ascertained fact that there were mice in the room, they having been caught in traps; and, in further corroboration of their depredations, on one occasion, whilst slicing the loaf in the fanciful mode formerly described, the scythe-like knife had severed one in two, which, however, occasioned no other waste or loss than what the delinquent mouse had disposed of during the tunnelling process, and was only learnt from the monitors after breakfast; not that the knowledge thereof *prior* to that meal would have made any difference to the hungry boys.

'Riving,' then, was amongst the regular, established order of things, and classed among the higher attainments of the school; with this distinction, however, that it was found in the boys' category alone, instead of the regular curriculum. As one of the applied sciences, it was remarkable how early the initiated perfected themselves therein, much more intelligently than in some other divisions of this branch of study,—haymaking, for example, as previously shown;—but it had this drawback, like some other profitable employs, it was limited in its operation. This coveted post, as above remarked, being a monopoly enjoyed only by a few, and those the bigger boys, by whom it was looked upon as a vested right, looming up before the rest as one to which aspiring juniors might one day hope to succeed, tantamount to winning a 'fellowship,' and thereby affording additional evidence of the *unknown* advantages resulting from a training in those model institutions.

The two privileged ones on the day in question were Aslem and Buddy, who, on the completion of their duty, locked and handed the key of the bread-room to Mrs. Kearas as she stood by to see all right. On the following morning, the day of which this chapter treats, whilst one of the labouring men was passing the rear of the building, looking on to the yard, he observed that one of the windows of the room was open, and duly reported the circumstance to the schoolmistress. An immediate examination ensued, when it was discovered that the nails fastening down the sash on the inside had been removed, and that an entrance had been effected from the outside, that one loaf of the new batch

had disappeared, and another had been deposited on a box by the side of the window, doubtless for removal, but that the party had been disturbed. A search was immediately instituted by masters, teachers, and men, and here and there a recent foot-print detected, showing that the wall dividing the plantation from the yard had been scaled, and operations carried on in that direction. On entering the plantation, the grass and brush bore evidence of having been well trampled at a gap in the wall, the same at which, it will be remembered, Milly disappeared; but after a few steps, it became impossible to trace any further through the tangled underwood. No doubt, however, was entertained of the theft having been committed by some boy or boys, the major part of whom were by this time congregated along the playground side of the wall, watching the movements of the detectives with great interest, each new arrival thereat demanding with breathless haste what was the matter, and who did it; and as each demand met with the same indignant response of 'how would he know?' thereupon the questioner joined in the general and decided opinion that 'some one did it,' until, from vague suggestions, it proceeded to dark hints, and finally each whispered to the boy by his side 'that he knew,' and which drew forth the response, 'so did he.'

The party had gradually separated to continue their search in different parts of the wood, and the senior usher, in his zeal, had thrust himself into a thicket, the branches and brambles in which compelled him to shield his face with his arms. Just at the moment that he was in the act of relieving himself from a further obstruction, a scrambling was heard a little in advance, then a rush, and finally a dash over a height. Freeing himself as quickly as he could, the usher made his way to the spot whence the last sound came; but finding it too steep to venture a leap, and the ground being covered by brushwood, tall and thick, he halted.

Mr. Shadd, at a short distance, had been attracted by the same noise, and the ground in that direction being clear of bushes, he came ambling up to his senior just after his arrival at his halting-place. After a short consultation, they commenced a search with the view of discovering the hiding-place of those who had just eluded them. Casually pushing aside a supple clump of shoots growing out of an old stump, they found themselves within a well-beaten spot, completely surrounded by underwood, and thickly closed in by long rank weeds and tall grasses, evidently the resort of some of the boys. Casting his keen

glance around the interior, the usher made a spring, and, with a cry of exultation, drew from behind a superannuated molehill, covered with dead herbage, the missing loaf, from which a large crust had been torn. Without waiting to listen to the congratulations of Mr. Shadd, the delighted Grippem hastened to the top of the plantation, and, waving his prize on high, hallooed to the other members of the party, who speedily gathered around him, and listened, with admiration at this fresh proof of his wonderful natural instincts, as he related in glowing terms how his eye traced certain marks, and his ear detected certain sounds, and how, advancing cautiously to the place, he had almost grabbed the offenders, who only escaped by rolling over a precipice, but not before he had secured the proof of their guilt, all of which was borne evidence to by Mr. Shadd.

The next step was to ascertain who was in the habit of resorting to this particular spot; evidently some one was. To aid in solving this part of the problem, the boys, who were becoming greatly excited, were called over the wall and sternly questioned as to their knowledge in the matter. This part of the proceeding was more of form than otherwise, and only a prelude to what followed; for, although strictly true in their avowals of ignorance, had it been otherwise it would have been the same, no information would have been elicited. Here, however, the superlative instincts of Mr. Grippem, abetted by the excellent Grumbleby system, were once more conspicuous. Surrounded by those with whom it was so much his interest to maintain the *prestige* accorded him, the idea of being at fault was out of the question, so, stepping forward, as he bade the gathering lads stretch out into a long line, his eye went slowly along, fiercely scanning each boy until he made him wince. But the first inspection resulted in nothing. A sigh of relief escaped the lips of the more timid, as they fancied the ordeal was over, and were about crowding together again to converse or shelter themselves from that dreaded gaze; but a harsh shout, followed by a command not to dare to stir, arrested them. Once more he ran his eye along the rank, when, falling upon Kappa, who at that moment was driving his elbow into his neighbour's side by way of retaliation for pushing against him, Mr. Grippem's austere countenance suddenly relaxed, and his harsh features assumed a cynical smile, and, rubbing his hands, he exclaimed, 'Oh, it's you, is it? Oh! ah! yes! I see. That'll do, that'll do; all right, all right; we'll soon get to the bottom of it now. You, Kappa, come here.'

In vain Kappa protested 'that it warn't he,' and as he obstinately persisted in such denial, nothing remained but to order all down to the school-room to await a court of inquiry, in which the prejudged Kappa was certain to be convicted and punished, unless he availed himself of the alternative of producing the real criminal, or, following the precedent in his own case, accused some other as guiltless as himself, on whom the full penalty might fall, since Mr. Grippem's reputation was not to be jeopardized.

As they wended their way, such of the boys as had been absent from the scene on other parts of the ground, amongst whom was Willie, came running up to ascertain the cause of the 'all in.'

'Wur it you, Kap? said one.'

'Me!' exclaimed Kappa.'

'Wur it?' said another.

'Nah is 't loikely? Thenk aw'd ha' ben sichen a foil to gie owd Grip a chance o' getten 't?' replied Kappa, indignant at the implied simplicity.

'No, I b'lieve yer; Kappa an't that daft,' said Bangs, which great confidence in Kappa's superior tact was echoed by half-a-dozen others.

'Well, whoever 't wur, he wur a ninnyhammer, a regular spooney, to let Grip clap eyes on't. Warn't it a beauty?' observed Knapp, smacking his lips.

'I know who 't was,' said one, who was proverbial for knowing everything.

'Oh, in course you do! hear him! Who now?'

The knowing one approached Kappa, and, putting his hands on each side of his mouth lest any part of the information should escape, whispered in the other's ear, at the conclusion of which Kappa nodded his head, looked very wise, and exclaiming 'You savvy!' jumped over another lad's back, a number of the boys having engaged in a game of leap-frog as they pursued their way to the school.

'Who was it, Kap? Tell us, I'll not blab,' said a boy, over whose back next in turn he was about leaping, at the same time raising his head, but which movement had the effect of causing the frog to come down on the ground sprawling as he went over.

'Stop your jaw when a chap's lepping, an' tuck in your tuppenny!' exclaimed Kappa, as he picked himself up, and pulled the gravel out of his torn hand.

By the time the school-room was reached the stragglers from other parts of the ground had arrived, amongst whom were

Aslem and his partner Buddy, who, leaping over the wall on the Long Close side, came running up panting, and demanded with eagerness what the row was about. 'Ah, you're going to catch it!' shouted half-a-dozen voices at once.

'What for?' demanded Buddy.

'Oh, we know?!

'What for?' said Aslem. 'None of your sauce;' and thereupon he dived into the crowd and bestowed a few cuffs and kicks that effectually put a stop to all further such remarks, but not to a very general round of significant facial contortions, that were as expressive as words, only, not being seen or heard by the party concerned, not so offensive.

As the two ushers were seen approaching, the boys hurried in and took their places at the desks.

'Call the names!' exclaimed Mr. Grippem, as he walked down the room to the further end, followed by the shadow, without deigning to cast a look to the right or the left, 'and shut the door.' As no other of the authorities made their appearance, it was concluded that, relying on his astuteness in following up the clue so cleverly obtained, the matter had been entirely entrusted to his skilful conduct. The roll called, all were reported present except Trelawney.

'Trelawney, where's he?' No one replied. 'Nobody know? Well, we'll see where he is directly. Now then, come up here, Kappa.'

Mr. Grippem opened his huge desk, and, after a momentary search therein, engaged in a low conversation with Mr. Shadd, their heads screened from the boys by the lid.

Kappa wheeled himself over the form, and, perceiving how the teachers were engaged, went through the usual course of attitudes and grimaces on his way, adding thereto the ordinary Grumbleby dance, which was generally performed at the latter part of the exercise through which he was about to be put; all of which, of course, was much to the diversion of his schoolmates, who severally exhorted him to be game, but for which there was scarcely any need. Arrived at the pretorium, he performed a double-shuffle, terminating the same by a grand salaam which, as it created a more than ordinary movement throughout the school, attracted the attention of the ushers, who thereupon raised their heads, and letting the lid of the desk slam, that caused an instant reaction, Mr. Grippem demanded, in a loud and angry tone, 'if Mr. Kappa was coming up or no?'

'Here aw is,' drawled that entertaining young gentleman.

'Then why don't ye stand where I can see you?' exclaimed the usher; whereupon Kappa sidled round, but speedily retreated to the same place, as the teacher struck his cane on his desk and shouted 'Silence!' under the impression that he was about to lay it on *his* shoulders.

'Where is that fellow?' exclaimed the usher, looking straight before him.

'Here aw is,' repeated the boy, again stepping to the front, but keeping his eyes very steadily on the cane hand, whilst the usher was running his around the school, to ascertain if all were in a due state of preparation; then, without allowing his gaze to fall upon the culprit before him, and sternly addressing the school at large, he commenced in a slow measured manner, twisting his cane into various shapes as he proceeded, much to the discomfort of Kappa, who more than once dodged during the proceeding, well aware that it was not at all unusual to interlard such address with a sudden blow, by way of creating a greater impression on the audience.

'The enormity of the crime with which this boy stands charged requires more than common notice. I have therefore, contrary to my usual mode, consulted Mr. Shadd, who agrees with me,'—that gentleman had so far agreed that he had wisely, for his own sake, coincided in all his senior proposed,—'and we have concluded that the punishment must be severe, very severe, sufficiently so to deter any one from repeating so flagrant an act. Flagrant, did I call it?—flagrant's too mild a term. Flagrant, Mr. Shadd?'—his tone of voice was changing. Mr. Shadd nodded in token of assent. 'Flagrant, do you say? flagrant, Mr. Shadd?' Mr. Shadd was posed, but shook his head this time at a venture.

'No, sir, I should think not.'

'What, sir, do you call flagrant?' Mr. Shadd was about to say, but on consideration concluded he had better not, so, preferring to be non-committal, he shook his head, that action having first been approved. Mr. Grippem turned to the school, and with a shout and ferocity of manner that caused the bigger boys to pause in their bye-play, and the little ones to hold their breath, exclaimed:

'What! what! Steal bread! steal bread!' A pause, then lowering his voice, 'If it had been a slate, or a pencil, or—or—even a cabbage,—though let me catch any of you doing it, that's

all,—but to steal bread!’ Mr. Grippem paused; the thought, as he turned towards the shadow, seemed too big to grapple without that gentleman’s aid, who, in recognition of the appeal, heaved a deep sigh, shook his head,—this time very much,—but said nothing. Turning again to the school, he continued, in a quasi-inquiring tone and manner, ‘Don’t you get enough to eat? Don’t you?’ He paused, but perceiving some ominous signs, as though about to reply, from a lower bench, he resumed more rapidly, ‘Don’t I twice a day give each of you half-a-slice, and some of you all the crumbs in the basket? don’t I? don’t I?’ and here he brought his cane down on the desk, each time in such harmony with his shriek, that, experienced as Kappa was, he began to think it *was* rather serious, or was going to be. ‘What will that generous, benevolent-hearted woman, Mrs. Kearas, think of me?’ Mr. Grippem’s voice softened; he was evidently affected; he drew out his handkerchief, and blew a blast which in some measure restored him, and he resumed, ‘Do I eat it myself?’—there was no such thought ever passed through a Grumbleby noddle; on the contrary, to do him justice, it was universally believed he never touched any of the rare kinds of food that he served out to the school. ‘Does Mr. Shadd?’—he was equally guiltless, giving, like his senior, undoubted preference to the white bread. ‘No, young gentlemen, none of you dare charge us with that; and yet, here’s one of you—you, respectable, well-fed, over-fed boys—goes and steals a *whole* loaf. Look at him.’ Before Kappa could anticipate the intention, he had him by the hair, twisting his spare figure round for inspection. ‘What do you say to that, Mr. Shadd?’ and he turned Kappa’s head towards that person.

‘It bangs all!’ responded Mr. Shadd, taken off his guard, and stepping back.

‘It more than bangs all, Mr. Shadd; it more than bangs all; it’s the worst case I ever heard of. And now, you arrant scamp, that has brought such disgrace on your fellow-scholars, what do you say?’—thereupon the usher, still retaining his hold, jerked his head back, forcing Kappa to look justice in the face,—‘what do you say?’

‘Cos aw dedn’t,’ said the lad with some energy, from the unmerciful way in which the usher pulled his hair.

‘Oh, you deny it,’—letting go his head,—‘you deny it, do you?’ Kappa retreated beyond reach of the cane. ‘Mr. Shadd, I wish you’d stir yourself, and bring that boy up whilst I talk to

him, and see there's no flinching.' Mr. Shadd descended the platform as quickly as his legs would permit, and by coaxing and pushing, brought him into closer proximity.

'And you can look me in the face and say it was not you?'

'Aw know'd it warn't.'

'Now, sir, how can you say that? how can you possibly hope to make me believe it? What proof can you give?'

'Cos—cos—aw'd a put 't wheer tha'd niver gotten seet o't, aw bet ye.' Kappa uttered this in a tone that implied a decided conviction that he had completely vindicated himself from any complicity in the theft.

'Oh, that's the proof! And so you intended to do that, did you? only that, coming upon you in the nick of time, you and your partner had barely time to put it where I got it, in your den, and then fly?'

'Noa, tha ded na ; aw's gotten noa den thur.'

'Silence, sir, no talk. Who was the other boy,—your partner Confess now, and I'll only give you half what you deserve.'

'An' 'll he get hauf th' lickin'? Coom on, Titmarsh, tha knows we goa shaars.' A shuffle and a giggle went round the desks, and thereupon a loud slap of the cane on the desk, followed by the usher's request to see another smile on anybody's face ; but in which request, as his gaze went over the forms, he was not gratified, the smile having subsided as quickly as it rose.

'Oh, Titmarsh, aye? I thought I'd get at the bottom of it, Mr. Shadd. Stand further round, Kappa ; come up here, Titmarsh.' Thereupon Titmarsh began to protest most vehemently that 'it was a whacker, and he didn't know the first thing about it ;' but as such protestations were usual, they availed him nothing, and his presence being peremptorily insisted on, he took his place by the side of his partner. After some further questioning, without eliciting anything to exculpate the accused, the usher drew the dread birch from his desk, and bade them prepare for a flogging across the desk.

During the examination, Frendzburgh had entered the school without attracting the teacher's notice, and learned from Willie the cause of the commotion ; and further, the whispered suspicion that the theft was committed by the two boys who had been engaged in the previous day's baking, they having been seen to enter the plantation together a short time before the hue and cry, and afterwards met running down the declivity and scrambling through the bushes, in apparent great alarm, by one of the

boys on his way from the river, which was added to by their subsequent late return, and further confirmed by the conversation that Willie now recalled, as having overheard whilst lying in his place of retirement some time previously, the tenor of which harmonized with the course adopted by the culprits. The narration of these circumstances to Frendzburgh had been overheard by one of Aslem's parasites, who, instantly sneaking behind the forms on the side next the wall, crept down to Aslem, and hurriedly acquainted him with what he had just heard.

Alarmed and excited, and fearful lest Frendzburgh should interfere to save the two victims, and thereby open the way to a further investigation, he shouted out, in a disguised voice, 'Trelawney!' at the moment the usher was ordering the boys to strip.

Arrested by the cry, the usher remounted the platform and demanded 'who that was calling out?' Then, as the name took form in his mind, he recollected, and, looking over at his seat, exclaimed, 'Oh yes, Trelawney, you're there, are you?' and then, carried away by his irritated feelings, just then not under control, added, 'in time to give some account of yourself. Where were you, sir, when the names were called?'

'Out, sir,' responded Frendzburgh rather curtly, annoyed at the malicious way in which the teacher's attention had been called to himself.

'Don't I know that, sir?' exclaimed the irascible usher, additionally angered at the short response. 'Come up here and give some account of yourself; perhaps we may learn something more than you were *out*, something that will place the saddle on somebody else's back in addition to these.'

A pause ensued, followed by an uneasy movement in the school. The situation was almost unprecedented. Hitherto the usher, either from want of occasion or intentionally, had refrained from placing himself in such direct antagonism with this senior scholar, and even now would have avoided, if possible, the consequences of his precipitate action, suddenly betrayed thereto by the spiteful interference of Aslem at such a moment of irritation; but there was no help for it now but to go on.

'Did you hear me, Trelawney?' Another pause, this time accompanied by a silence, as though every boy was afraid to breathe.

Willie clutched the arm of his friend and looked imploringly

into his face. Moved by this action, which he at once comprehended, he threw his legs over his seat, and walked, with as much calmness as he could command, to the platform, followed by Willie, whose trepidation rendered him insensible to his proceeding. As a gust of wind, on some still, scorching morning, passing over the rookery pines, caused a momentary flutter amongst the topmost leaves, so a perceptible breathing and slight movement went through the school, followed by a sigh of relief, in which the usher seemed to share, and that fell even on his shadow.

As the eyes of the two met, there was a quiet frankness in the countenance of the boy, that operated irresistibly upon the imperious usher, and compelled him, despite himself, to address him in milder tones; it may be, further aided by his having thus acknowledged his authority.

'Where were you,' said the usher, 'that you were not in school when called?'

'I was asleep on the other side of the calf-garth,' was the truthful response, 'and not aware that the "all in" had been called.'

The teacher regarded him for a second or two as though doubting him, at the same time pondering whether he had better question him on the matter in hand. Concluding he had as much as he could manage at present, he said, 'Umph! Well, I'll look over it this time; but I have more than once of late had reason to be displeased with your conduct. Take care; don't provoke me.' His warmth of manner was returning as his words waxed stronger, and fancying he noticed a flash of daring in Frendzburgh's eye as he uttered these words, he raised his voice, and with increased asperity added, as he shook his birch at him, 'If you do, I'll flog you; aye, birch you,—birch you, if you were as big as Goliath, or as strong as Samson. Mark what I say,' and he glanced savagely on the boy, who, though somewhat stirred by such a threat, was too prudent to provoke what would probably, with the resources at the usher's command, have proved an unequal contest, yet exhibited no emotion of fear. 'Go to your seat!'

As Frendzburgh was about to obey, the usher's eyes fell on Willie. 'And what do you want?' The boy fairly jumped with terror, as the now infuriated man glared at him. 'Is he instilling his craft into you?' Then, addressing the elder, he continued, 'I'm not blind; I've noticed your doings and your influence over that child. Take care, or you may get *him* into trouble too.'

Frendzburgh, though prudent, and, under the peculiar circum-

stances, necessarily so when in conflict with one so potent at the Hall, conceived it would be unmanly to permit imputations so discreditable as the words uttered implied, and thereupon turned hastily round to attempt a vindication. The little colour that was there had fled from his cheeks. The usher appeared agitated, but at that moment Frendzburgh's hand was clasped and pulled by Willie, and yielding to the constraint he turned and retired to his seat.

The usher stepped back to his desk, opened it, and, hid by the lid, remained for some moments as though searching its contents, but in reality to afford time for his excitement to somewhat subside; at the conclusion, he slammed the lid, took up his hat, and, to the surprise and great relief of the school, who had been trembling for the issue, strode out of the room, followed by the shadow.

The school was out, and so were the exuberant spirits of the boys, which rose in proportion to their late repression, augmented by the mad freaks of Kappa and his partner, who, after taking possession of the platform vacated by Messrs. Grippem and Shadd, and going through sundry grotesque imitations of these two worthies, by way of appreciation of their narrow escape from castigation, darted amongst the uproarious crowd, and brought the transports of some of the smaller ones to an abrupt termination by pitching into them right and left.

Like many similar occurrences, its influence did not outlive the day, and soon ceased to be referred to, if we except an occasional regret of Kappa's that 'it 'ud nobbut been hissen as 'ud gotten paws on t' breed;' and its effect upon the two seniors, Frendzburgh and Aslem, whose animosity, increased by the latter's dastardly action, caused them to avoid each other with still greater carefulness, but which it was scarcely possible to do for any long continuance.

A few days subsequent to the above event, Frendzburgh had mechanically strolled over to the four-barred gate opening into the adjoining close or field, and, leaning with folded arms across the top rail, he became absorbed in speculations of the future. Willie, in company with Trotter, who had lately formed a closer companionship with the former, was down at the beck remodeling their dam, in order to give a larger supply of water-power to their little mill. Returning from a part of the field with a load of turf and stone, almost too heavy for him, and which he had deposited on the ground to rest himself when about half-way,

Trotter was attracted by the proceedings of Aslem, who had leaped over the wall lower down, and, in company with Buddy and another boy, was making toward Willie, who was too much engaged at his dam to be aware of their presence, until he found himself rudely seized by the collar.

'Well, young parson,' said Aslem, 'what ha' ye got to say agin me?'

'Nothing,' said the boy, 'that I know of,' as he rose to his feet, and looked inquiringly at his interrogator.

'Nothing, ain't ye? Then what made you go telling lies about me, eh?'

Willie looked perplexed, unable to comprehend his meaning.

'Oh yes, I know all about it now. In course you're too good a boy,—such a young saint,—too good to do anything bad, much less say. See at that gab,' said he, addressing his two companions, at the same time forcing open Willie's mouth. 'Why, I swear butter wouldn't melt in it!' whereat the others laughed heartily, and proposed to try mud, which, if it didn't melt, would prove more effectual in stopping it up. 'An' so you're sayin' to everyone I had somethin' to do with that loaf.'

'When?' responded Willie. 'Who says so? Why, I never'—but, suddenly recollecting his communication to Frendzburgh at the time of the investigation, he paused, wondering if the latter had repeated it, and ignorant that he had been overheard by the boy who communicated it to Aslem.

'Aw say ye did,' chimed in Buddy. 'Didn't Trimmer hear ye blabbing it to Trelawney?'

'What d' ye say to that? Ye see I know more than ye think. Catch hold on him an' take him ahind the furnace wall, and we'll teach the young varmint to tell lies on any of us.' Whereupon the two boys seized Willie by the arms, and were dragging him off, when Aslem's attention was attracted to the mill and the embankment. 'What's this?' said he; and lifting a large stone, he threw it with force on the work of many play-hours, and was about to repeat the act, and totally demolish the ruin, when Trotter, who had been watching at a distance, cried out to let it alone, claiming it as his own, hoping thereby to stay the ruthless hand. Dashing the stone upon it again, Aslem turned round and gave chase to the boy, who, however, having the advantage of distance between them, managed to escape over the wall before he got near.

With his temper by no means moderated by this failure, he

turned to the others, who had dragged Willie a few yards only, the boy resolutely refusing to allow himself to be taken except by main force. 'Be gow!' exclaimed Aslem, as he came up, 'take hold on him by the legs and arms. I'll pay him out for that.' Then, carried by the three, they made their way to the opening into the playground, opposite to the place indicated, edified and amused on the road by the intimations from Aslem that 'he'd give the young parson summat to preach about under archways;' and adding, as he looked at his assistants for their approval, 'and them as took him there to wheedle it out of him. We'll pay *him* out yet, an' that afore long.' To which the others, as they halted a moment to rest, responded, with much acrimony, 'that they bet they would, and he'd get what he wanted; putting these young cubs up agin the big uns.'

Of course they did not reach the place selected for 'paying out' Willie without being observed, and exciting in more than one a feeling of sorrow for the boy, but which dared not exhibit itself except in a whisper to some equally sympathising junior, for, though the compassion was shared in by a larger number than usual in such cases, arising from a growing feeling towards the winsome boy, the odds were too great, the drilling too perfect, and the enforced submission to the inevitable too strong a feature in Grumbleby ethics, to permit the indulgence of any thought of resistance or interference.

'Take off your coat,' said Aslem, addressing Willie, as they stood him on his feet behind the wall. 'Be gow!' he exclaimed, as he found he made no movement to comply, 'I'll give it ye hot and tight. Pull off his coat, boys, whilst I get a whaler.' In a trice the coat was torn off the uselessly resisting lad's back, and Aslem reappeared with a piece of rope, which he proceeded to double. 'Now then, parson,' said he, as he looked round with a malicious smile at his gathering auditory, 'I'll teach ye how to preach about me. You don't know how yet, but you will afore I've done with you; an' you'll get so fond o' me that you'll 'clude me in your prayers along o' t'other chap;—why you'll both on ye have a prayer-meetin' on my account;' whereupon the crowd set up a hearty laugh, whilst Buddy and his companion drew their hair further over their eyes, and pulling long faces, put their hands together, as though anticipating the prayer-meeting.

'Won't you let me tell you,' said Willie, appealing to Aslem, 'before you strike me?'

'If you open your gallus mouth to pray one prayer, I'll shove my fist down your throat,' said the refined, inexorable youth.

'He's funking now,' said Buddy; 'I know'd we'd cow him. What a pity that big cove ain't here to see petty brayed!'

'Hold tight, lads; no flinching!' shouted Aslem, throwing the rope over his shoulder, then putting forth his strength to bring it down on Willie's coatless back with all his might. It was suddenly caught with such a jerk that Aslem was flung to the ground with someone on the top of him. Startled by the precipitancy of the act, the crowd rushed to a short distance, but recovering as they ascertained the cause, they again drew close, but now with increased interest, for, as the two gathered themselves up, the party who had then so opportunely interposed proved to be Frendzburgh.

'Be gow!' exclaimed Aslem, scrambling to his feet and rubbing his arm, 'who did that?' and as he turned round savagely, his eyes met those of Frendzburgh, who was also shaking his hand, smarting from the strain, and unable to speak from the breathless haste he had made to the scene of the intended punishment, followed by Trotter, who, after his escape from Aslem, had gone in search of their mutual friend, whom he found at the gate, occupied as before stated.

Enraged at being thus baulked of his anticipated vengeance, and that too before so many, for in addition to those already assembled, the sight of Trelawney and Trotter running with such speed having apprised those within hail that something was astir, had caused a general rush to the spot, Aslem's temper became ungovernable, and advancing towards Frendzburgh, he shook his fist, unable to utter a word. In response, however, to his gesticulation, Frendzburgh raised the rope that he had picked up, as though with the intention of striking, but at which Aslem did not flinch, whilst the other two advanced to his side.

'What business have you interfering, I'd like to know?' demanded Buddy.

Frendzburgh looked at him from head to foot with a contemptuous sneer, but made no reply, and carelessly threw the rope over the wall into the cabbage garden.

'Tha'rt too cockish by haulf,' said the third boy, who was our old friend Kappa, 'and want pullin' doan a peg, and it's gotten to coom.'

Frendzburgh turned his attention to the last speaker, and,

thrusting his hands into his pockets, said, in a bantering tone, 'Well, now's your time to do it.'

'Oh crikey !' shouted some of the smaller boys to one or two others, as they came running up, 'there's going to be a jolly fight 'tween the big uns.'

'Tell ye what,' interposed Buddy, 'I and Kappa'll feyt ye, one doan t'other come on.'

'No objection,' said Frendzburgh, in a cool indifferent manner, which seemed rather to affect Kappa, who suggested 'he'd prefer both at once,' which set half-a-dozen urchins running, jumping, and squaring at one another, whilst the rest set up a shout of derision, which called Kappa forth in pursuit of one he knew he could 'drub.'

By this time Aslem had recovered himself sufficiently to give utterance to his towering passion, and exclaimed, with clenched teeth, 'Trelawney, I'm cock-o'-the garth, and mean to be. I was here before you, and I'm not going to let you crow over me,' and he snapped his fingers in his face. Trelawney raised his hand, and his eyes flashed. Aslem stepped back and continued, 'Will you fight me with one hand ?'

'What would be the use of that, there's not much difference in size; if I'm taller, you're stouter; try both hands,' replied Frendzburgh.

Afraid there would be no fight, some urged him to accept Aslem's challenge, as being able to cope with him at such disadvantage, whilst others hinted 'Aslem was plucky, and would knock him to Halifax.' Willie, in the meantime, stepping to his side, was about to entreat his friend to withdraw, deeply pained at being the innocent occasion of the collision, but was prevented by the bigger boys hustling him to the rear.

'Take him, take him, Trelawney !' shouted two or three boys.

'He's afraid !' exclaimed Aslem with a contemptuous curl on his lip. 'You're witness I've challenged him, and he's afraid.'

Frendzburgh's better judgment had already, in previous encounters during his Grumbleby experience, convinced him of the absurdity of this mode of settling differences, and should now have given its verdict against it, as such exhibitions of prowess, even were Aslem to be the victor, could do nothing further than afford an equivocal superiority, that would in all probability be disputed on the first occasion of its assertion, since it was not likely that Frendzburgh, or any other similarly situated, would submit to the hypothesis that he had only one hand ; indeed, it may be

conjectured that any such attempted enforcement of authority would arouse the natural instinct of self-preservation or defence, into a forgetfulness of any such idea, overpowered by the consciousness that he had two hands. However, as this mode presented the opportunity of 'mauling' one who otherwise could not be touched, it was adopted by all the academies, and could not be avoided except at the loss of *prestige*, so the two boys retired to the schoolroom to engage in the now certainly unequal contest, followed by the excited boys, affected by varied emotions, according to their interest in one or the other, but which, on the part of the younger ones, greatly preponderated on the side of Frendzburgh.

The door closed, and forms and desks removed out of the way, the contestants proceeded to throw off their coats, girth their waists, and tuck up their shirt-sleeves in true artistic style. Aslem's thick-set, compact frame showed to advantage beside that of his slighter-built antagonist; his foot was firm, and his quick restless eye told that every movement of his opponent would be keenly watched. A springy footstep would enable him to advance, retire, or play around him to great advantage; while his broad chest and muscle-developed arms evidenced his ability to give and take blows with good effect.

Frendzburgh's straight, well-turned limbs and body, though slighter, and, from the fact of his unusual growth, more bony, could not have failed to elicit admiration from an admirer of the human frame for its perfect symmetry; but these, added to the fact that he was neither so heavy nor so expert in the pugilistic art, were not just the qualities best adapting him to cope with his wary opponent; but, as some set off, his arms were longer, and being taller, his face was at a safer distance from the other's knuckles.

The backers having been selected, and Frendzburgh's left arm securely fastened behind, a large ring was formed by the bigger boys, whilst the desks and forms were mounted by the smaller, and all was declared ready. A more than usual excitement was apparent, for, though a fight was almost of daily occurrence, it was rare that the leaders thus interfered with each other, and the two admitted chiefs had never before come thus into collision.

But we cannot describe it; even at this distance of time a shudder comes over us as we recall this and other such painful embruting scenes. Suffice it, it lasted long and was cruel.

Inflamed by their aroused passions, like two bull-dogs, the sight of their bleeding faces and the feel of their bruised limbs only hounded them on the more ferociously, until, worn-out, they were unable to continue, and ceased from sheer exhaustion. Thenceforth it was recalled as the severest, most dogged contest that had been witnessed at the Hall; adding considerably to the deference paid to both parties, but without deciding the issue sought, as it had not terminated in a victory to either party. On the contrary, Frendzburgh, smarting under the severity of his punishment, and without doubt the worsted of the two, after laving himself at the beck, to which both were assisted by their mutual friends, approached Aslem, and as vehemently as his prostrated energies would permit, exclaimed, 'Aslem, I have proved to you I am no coward, and though you were perhaps a match for me this time, mind henceforth I have *two* hands;' and with that turned on his heel without waiting for a reply, or to observe the sneer on Aslem's face, indicative of implacable animosity, as well as triumph at this partial admission of his prowess.

END OF VOLUME I.



